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Fourth Quarter Blues

Another Fourth Quarter season has passed and America has once again gorged itself at the trough of consumerism called Christmas. The game industry, of course, has gone through its annual agony of too many great products competing for too little shelf space and too few consumers dollars. Every day in this office throughout the fourth quarter we get at least twenty Fed Ex packages, each of which contains a game that we've been eagerly anticipating since at least E3. Then each of those games goes onto a table with a huge stack of other shrink-wrapped packages that we don't have time to open, much less play.

I absolutely do not understand why game companies do this every year. After all, we get paid to play games, and we can't keep up with the flood of products that overload store shelves during this season. What must it be like for the average consumer? According to studies of purchasing patterns, the hard-core gamer purchases 15 games a year, three of those during December (including gifts for others). When faced with a dizzying array of products to choose from, what do shoppers do? They do what any of us do, retreat into the safety of familiarity. They look for sequels to games they enjoyed in the past or games from big companies that have a reputation for producing good product.

The result of this is predictable. A few games and a few big companies emerge as big winners. Other new and innovative games from small companies that might only have one release a year get strangled at retail. Companies go out of business, people lose their jobs, products get cancelled, and yet another round of shakeups and consolidations traumatizes the whole industry. Then everyone promises that next year is going to be different and we fall right back into the same pattern. In the meantime, gamers suffer through an annual drought of good product that usually stretches from April through August.

A lot of this stems from the mentality of the high-level sales and marketing personnel of big companies. As the gaming industry grew out of the "garage entrepreneur" stage and began looking for professional sales and marketing staffs, companies began recruiting from the toy business, where there is only one season – Christmas. Despite the growth of this industry into the burgeoning mainstream and shifting demographics that say the average gamer is in his (gamers are still 95% male) mid-twenties, they are still trapped in that toy mentality. They think of gaming as a niche of the toy industry aiming for kids, and they set their product release and distribution schedules accordingly.

Unfortunately, the toy industry is a really bad example for gaming to follow. Toys have a predictable production time, solid release schedules, and a low level of investment of time and money for the consumer. Games have none of these things. Toys are products, physical objects. It's easy to quantify Barbie – does she have all her arms and legs? Does she have a super new outfit? Great, get her into the stores! Games aren't products - they're experiences, entertainment, even (dare I say it?) art. You cannot schedule art like a product and expect it to be any good. Trying to do so is what produces a season like this, 1400 Command and Conquer clones in identically slick boxes all killing each other at Christmas.

Since this business has to make money in order to survive, though, what's the solution? I can't claim to have all the answers, but we can start by abandoning the toy business model and start patterning ourselves after the only industry that comes close to scheduling art – the movies. Hollywood divides movies up into A, B, C, and D (direct to video) titles, provides appropriate resources and production time, and most importantly, doesn't rely on one season for the bulk of it's income. True, Hollywood does inflict the "Summer Blockbusters" on us every year, but when was the last time you looked at a multiplex marquee during any month of the year and didn't see A-level product showing? Movie-goers have come to expect that there will always be something good to see at the theater. Imagine, though, if every good movie of the year, from the big-budget Schwarzenegger explode-o-rama to the latest Merchant-Ivory art flick, came out in the same eight-week period. Then for the rest of the year, you were stuck watching a collection of "Ernest" movies and all sorts of stuff starring Pauly Shore. That's the current state of gaming.

Hollywood certainly isn't perfect, but their production, scheduling and distribution practices have managed to create an industry that's remained relatively stable for over 100 years. Say what you want about the quality of Hollywood's "art" – 90% of it is crap, they're too enamored of big explosions - they've still created an environment that can produce both Independence Day and The Full Monty. There's enough room for mass-market stuff that makes tons of money and the small independent film that advances the art of film-making. With a sane production and distribution schedule, gaming would have enough room not only for big-budget C&C clones but also for things like Blue Byte's Incubation, a really good game that's probably going to get crushed by bigger releases this Christmas. People play games the year round, and there's money to be made in other months of the year, more in the long run, since there's less competition in other months and your game's more likely to be picked up and remembered.

America leads the world in three things, movies, music, and television shows. What do all these things have in common? They're all dependent on the commercialization of non-physical intellectual properties – you know, art. They're all Information Age industries and they've all got similar distribution and production systems. True, they've all got periods when all the good stuff comes out, movies have summer, TV has sweeps, but none of them applies the same antiquated Industrial Age thinking to it's business model that gaming companies do. None of them have ever been so shortsighted that their actions as a whole threatened the very industry they were a part of. NBC may go out of business, but there'll still be television. Gaming and gaming companies don't have that luxury. Gaming is still too young, still too small, and most importantly, still too niche. If we do not manage our growth into the mainstream properly and set good precedents now, gaming may very well join 3D glasses, quadrophonic sound and roller-disco on the ash heap of entertainment history.

Phil Paisnel

Phil Paisnel

CGE CD-ROM

FREE GAMES

COMPANIONS OF XANTH

Based on 'Demons Don't Dream' the wildly popular Xanth novel by Piers Anthony, you explore this magical world of mythic wonders and become a player in a game where the stakes are the existence of magic itself. Discover the hazards and wonders of Xanth first hand as you interact with Elves, Ogres, Centaurs, Demons, Golems, a serpentine Naga princess, and even the deadly Gap Dragon.

Minimum Requirements:
386/33 or better PC
4MB RAM
640 x 480 SVGA graphics card
Microsoft compatible mouse.

TOWER OF SOULS

The fusion of fantasy role-playing with the dynamic action of arcade gaming will compel you to live the adventure that is Tower of Souls. Your quest is to enter the Tower of Souls and retrieve the Nydus Crystals, restoring the essence of Chaybore.

Minimum Requirements:
486 or better PC
4MB RAM
25 MB free hard disk space,
VGA graphics card

JETFIGHTER II

This is not only a flight simulator, but a complex action/adventure that contains a strategy game as well. If you are new to flight sims, then you should begin by studying the manual on the disc first. The Jetfighter series has been very successful for Mission Studios. Jetfighter III is currently on sale.

Minimum Requirements:
286 or better PC. 640K RAM. CD ROM Drive. VGA Graphics adapter and compatible monitor. We also recommend that you use a Microsoft compatible mouse or joystick and game adapter card.

ZORK I, II & III

The classic Zork trilogy features an unnamed adventurer who enters the white house (no, not that White House) and discovers a trapdoor leading to the underground empire of Zork. There, the adventurer's quest is to travel through the Empire and eventually become the Dungeon Master. These games were originally released by Infocom in the early 80's. These are the complete games, provided by Activision (who now own the rights to all of Infocom's text adventures).

Minimum Requirements:
These text based games will run fine under either DOS or Win95. Just run the compressed executable in any directory you want to install it into, sit back, and enjoy a real old-time text-adventure classic.
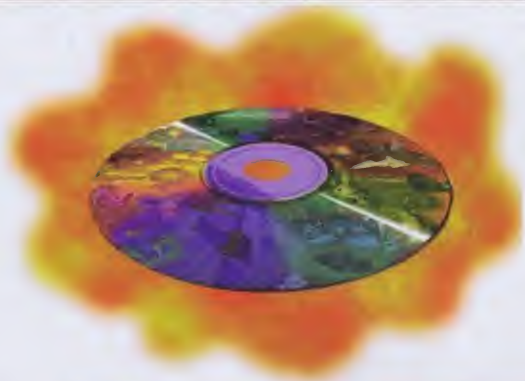
UTILITIES

TANARUS

Hey! Another Free Game, almost! Tanarus is Sony's fun new Internet only tank battle game. This starter kit will get you on-line with a basic tank rig. Where you go from there is up to you.

DIRECTX 5.0

The latest version of Microsoft's DirectX technology. Most of the demos and many of today's hottest games won't work without, so we've included it here to upgrade your system.

MPG-NET SETUP UTILITY

Install this utility and get on board the Multi-player games network. Create on-line personas, download stuff from the games library, and beat the stuffing out of people from all over the world.

PATCHES, UPDATES AND SCENARIOS

Silent Hunter Scenario: Operation Hammerhead Cruise the Sea of Japan, November, 1944
Outpost 2: Scenario Pack 1 and update- New Outpost 2 scenarios and updates to ver 2.0
Total Annihilation ver. 1.08 update plus add on unit.
Red Alert Ver 1.08

FREE DEMOS

7th Kingdoms
Interactive Magic
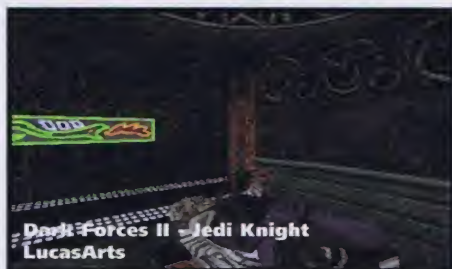
Dark Forces II - Jedi Knight
LucasArts

Man O War
Stratergy First

if-16
Interactive Magic
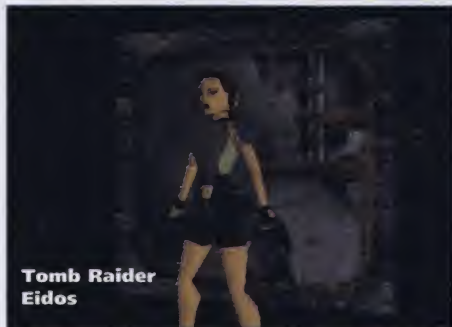
Tomb Raider
Eidos

Joint Strike Fighter
Published by: Eidos Interactive
www.eidos.com

Minimum Requirements:
P133 or greater CPU (P100 if you have a
3DFX card)
16MB of Ram or higher
1 MB Fast Video Card
Direct X 5.0 installed

Links LS '98
Published by Access Software
www.access.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 133
DirectX 5.0

Man O' War
Published by Strategy First
www.strategyfirst.com

Minimum Requirements:
512KB conventional memory
8MB RAM (16MB for Win95)
46MB free Hard Disk space

Pinball 3: Lost Continent
Published by Sierra On-Line
www.sierraonline.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95
DirectX5.0

Shipwreckers
Published by: Psygnosis
www.psygnosis.com

Minimum Requirements:
Windows 95
DirectX version 5
Some form of 3D acceleration hardware.
16Mb RAM (it may run in less - but don't
count on it)
4Mb VRAM (it will run with less, but
it doesn't look as nice)

Total Annihilation
Published by GT Interactive
www.gtinteractive.com

Minimum Requirements:
486/33 or better
Windows95
16 MB RAM
30 MB free hard disk space

7 Kingdoms
Published by Interactive Magic
www.imagicgames.com

Minimum requirements:
P75 or better
Windows95
DirectX5.0
16MB RAM
4X CD ROM

Byzantine: The Betrayel
Published by Discovery Interactive
www.planetexplorer.com

Minimum requirments:
Pentium 60 or better
Windows 95
17MB of Hard Drive Space

Test Drive 4
Published by Accolade
www.accolade.com

Minimum requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95

Pro Pinball - Timeshock
Published by Empire Interactive
www.empire.co.uk/propinball

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 100
Windows95
16MB RAM

Tomb Raider 2
Published by Eidos Interactive
www.eidos.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 100
16MB RAM
DirectX5.0

CART Precision Racing
Published by Microsoft
www.microsoft.com/games

Minimum requirements:
Pentium 60
Windows95
16MB RAM
30MB of hard disk space

Daytona USA Deluxe
Published by Sega Entertainment
www.segasoft.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium90
Windows95
16 MB RAM
5 MB Hard disk space

Defiance
Published by Avalon Hill
www.ahgames.com

Minimum Requirements:
486/33 or better running Windows 95 or Win-
dows 3.1x
16MB RAM minimum.
30MB free hard disk space.
2X or faster CD-ROM drive.

Dark Reign
Published by Activision
www.activision.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95
16MB RAM
130 MB free hard disk space
2X CD ROM

Excalibur 2555
Published by Sir-Tech
www.sir-tech.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 100
Windows95
16MB RAM
20 MB Hard Disk Space
2X CD ROM

IF-16
Published by Interactive Magic
www.imagicgames.com

Minimum Requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95
16MB RAM
32 MB hard disk space

Dark Forces II - Jedi Knight-
Published by Lucasarts
www.lucasarts.com

Minimum requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95
DirectX 5.0
16MB RAM

2X CD ROM

NHL '98
Published by EA Sports
www.ea.com

Minimum requirements:
Pentium 90
Windows95
DirectX 5.0
16MB RAM

More great stuff at:
www.cgentertainment.com
www.battlezone2.com

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is spreading
across
the map...

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enemy from the
high ground.

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from invasion.

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smoking 3-D segments.

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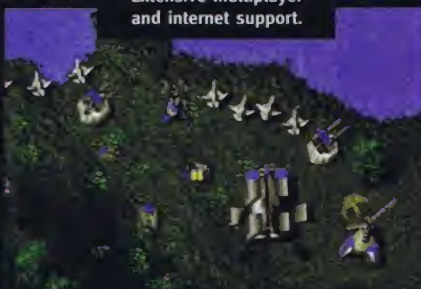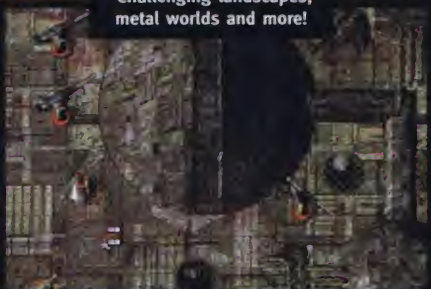
NEWS

Written by Gamers   Read by Gamers

Welcome to the CGE news, where all the news that fits — we print. CGE is committed to being as accurate, up to date and informative as possible, but if you think we've missed out on a news piece or you just want to spout off about something - e-mail us at *Mag@CGEntertainment.com.* For constantly updated news and information check out *www.cgentertainment.com/news.html*

Blue Byte Software Incubating With Special CD and Online

THE FIRST 10,000 die-hard fans of Incubation: Time is Running Out are in for a special treat--3 special bonus levels not featured in the game. The special edition CD also contains a selection of recent Blue Byte tunes to groove to, so it can feel like gaming even when fans are just chilling out to some music. In addition to this bonus CD, gamers should expect a follow up Incubation Mission CD and can send in for a free Incubation watch featuring the 'Green Alien' that is synonymous with the game (this offer is only available to fans in the US).

Extreme Assault and Incubation have both arrived on Mplayer to keep the incubating and assaulting going online. Mplayer provides features such as interactive speech (voice chat), text-based intertactive chat, pager, buddy lists and their famous Scribble Talk. There will also be opportunities to participate in tournaments and all night Incubation periods. Time is not running out to incubate or assault at Mplayer! http:\\www.bluebyte.com

Third Annual Video and Computer Game Report card.

The Minneapolis based National Institute on Media and the Family (NIMF), in collaboration with US Senators Joseph Lieberman and Herb Kohl have released their latest "opinions" on the computer game industry in The Third Annual Video and Computer Game Report Card. Written especially for parents, the survey is composed of over 70 computer games, and is conducted by visiting arcades, calling retail and rental stores and using a highly "specialized" panel of "trained parents" to evaluate games with KidScore, the rating system from NIMF.

The report contains a brief description of each game, recommendations for the target age of the game, and an indication on whether the game features violence, illegal or harmful activity, offensive language, nudity or sexual content, as well as a summary recommendation of the titles.

Computer specific titles held the longest section of the report, with several titles being listed as not recommended for children of any age. These titles included some highly popular games: Blood, Diablo, Postal, Quake II, and Shadow Warrior as well as the infamous War Gods (which should have been listed as not suitable for anyone). Missing from the not recommended list were Carmageddon and MDK, titles, that were listed as objectionable by Senator Lieberman.

Rock and Rave on Test Drive 4

RACING FANS can zone out to the soundtrack of Accolade Inc.'s Test Drive 4. The edgy driving simulation features the Euro grooves of Orbital and The Younger, Younger 28's as background music for the highly-anticipated racing game that will be zipping and zooming onto the PC and Sony Playstation game console.

In addition to the selections on the stereo, Test Drive 4 will feature ten licensed cars ranging in era from the late 1960s to the very latest models. Virtual drivers can take a spin in Corvettes, Camaros, Chevelles, Nissan 300ZXs, Dodge Vipers and Jaguar XJ220 among others. The settings sound as promising as the variety of games, with exotic locals including Bern and Kyoto, Japan. Of course a variety of environments, road conditions, traffic and police interference will be included to keep the driving all too real. Racing modes will include single race competition and the ever popular and famous International Rally Circuit. http:\\www.accolade.com/

Postal Under Fire!

POSTAL IS JUST ONE OF THOSE games that is already defying odds. The game press isn't impressed, the US Postal Service hates the title, and the game is coming under attack from parent and watchdog groups, yet it is blasting off the shelves like something out of a John Woo or Sam Peckinpah movie. But the latest opposition to the Running With Scissors' game is coming from the mainstream press, including the ever controversial Wall Street Journal. The paper dug deep to find some real dirt on RWS, and the most shocking bit was that the developer had previously created computer games for children including *Muppets* and *Sesame Street* products. The developers decided to take a big step and switch from wholesome children's entertainment to something completely different. So far, the choice seems to have been the right one with 10,000 units sold in the first week. The game was creating an early buzz in Europe, and even with a few minor edits (to meet the uber Standards of some countries) the game was already expected to be a huge hit. No word if any Muppets were hurt during the development of Postal. **http:\\www.runningwithscissors.com/**

Sign up for Classes Now For Games

NOW IT'S POSSIBLE to major in gaming at college instead of just making it a major extra-curricular activity, well sort of anyway. Moncton, New Brunswick's EBCI School of Arts and Technology will be offering a new program in game design and development. The program is already creating a stir within the industry, with topics said to include critical basis as level design, 3D engine design, aspects of network gaming with constant updates as technology pushes the gaming limits. Students can expect guest lecturers and

seminars from the brightest and best the industry has to offer. With a two-year course program around $11,000 (or $14,500 in Canadian currency), the real skill test may be convincing mom and dad that this the best way to spend their money for junior's college education. **http:\\www.ebci.com/**

Quarterback Club '98 Cancelled

DESPITE HIS legal problems (not to mention the thought of him in a garter belt), Marv Albert's voice will still remain in the PC (but is it PC?) version of Quarterback Club '98 from Acclaim. Unfortunately, the game itself has been cancelled. The software company refused to confirm that the cancellation had anything to do with the negative publicity surrounding Albert ever since his high profile court case. A spokeperson for the company stated that Acclaim "...was unable to make the game reach the standard set by the Nintendo 64 version." **http:\\www.acclaimnation.com/**

Resistance is NOT Futile

Proving once again that the Borg CAN be beaten, GT Interactive and Microprose announced that they were canceling their proposed merger. Both sides' PR spokespeople stated that "This just wasn't the right time for this". This coincided with opinions on Wall Street, where both companies' stocks actually dropped after the planned merger was announced. Microprose, however, has stated that the long term health of the company will not be impacted by the failed merger, and the company is putting plans into effect that will allow with company to survive as a stand-alone

Spectrum Holobyte is no more. The company has officially become Microprose, the name of the company it acquired in 1993. Products had been released under the two separate names (which are both about 15 years old) and that only led to marketplace confusion. To end the confusion the company decided to release all future products under the Microprose label including the 1998 lineup.

Among the titles that should hit retail from Microprose, whatever they are called, is an expansion set for the highly popular Magic: The Gathering. Spells of the Ancients will have special code allowing buyers to be the first to download the upcoming multiplayer patch for the original game. Other titles planned from Microprose include three new Star Trek titles, Star Trek: First Contact, Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard and Star Trek: Birth of the Federation. First Contact and Klingon Honor Guard are said to be 3D action games, while Birth of the Federation challenges players to build up a space civilization as one of the five Trek races: The Federation, Klingons, Cardassians, Ferengi, or Romulans. The prospects are good for this latest addition since this is familiar genre for Microprose who released the successful Master of Orion and it's excellent sequel game.

Microprose also has taken over the Mechwarrior license and the first title will be MechCommander. Finally, other titles to watch for from Microprose include Worms 2, European Air War, Guardians: Agent of Justice and a multi-player version of Civilization II. **http:\\www.microprose.com/**

Microsoft is in the Zone! But It's Time to Pay

THE INTERNET GAMING ZONE from Seattle software giant Microsoft is a smash hit with over 500,000 members, already making it the largest gaming service on the Internet. The Zone has seen membership increase by over 10,000 users a month, with new users coming to play a combination of free classic games and free multiplayer matchups of retail CD-ROMs including the latest titles from Microsoft as well as other third party games.

The Zone, which has been a free site, will start charging for premium content including titles that are developed specifically for the Internet. Current games and future retail-based games will remain free. For the online only games, Microsoft is planning a pay-to-play strategy as well as a monthly pricing structure. Gamers can jump into the cockpit of Fighter Ace for $1.95 a day, or join up for $19.95 for the whole month. **http:\\www.zone.net/**

Intel Moves into Arcade Arena

THE INTEL BUNNYMEN aren't scheduled to get their own arcade game just yet, but Intel formed the Open Arcade Architecture Forum last summer with key game developers including Acclaim, Gremlin Interactive, Microsoft and Sega Gameworks. More than 80 companies have joined the Open Arcade Architecture Forum, and the first titles using the architecture and Intel's Pentium II Processors have debuted: Race Arcade from Kalisto Entertainment, Plane Crazy from InnerWorkings, Kick-It from Interactive Light and SparkyNet OS arcade network. The open architecture will reduce costs for arcade operators since each game unit will not be limited to a single game.

AOL Online Battleground Heads to the Courtroom

WE'LL SEE THEM IN COURT. AOL, the world's largest online service, is being sued by Kesmai (a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate News Corporation) who claims that the online giant is making it difficult for smaller providers to compete fairly. AOL recently acquired Kesmai competitor, The Imagination Network, which was re-launched as WorldPlay and was positioning WorldPlay as its primary games channel. Kesmai claims that AOL redesigned their game's channel to give the appearance that Kesmai games are really WorldPlay titles. In addition, AOL recently instituted a $1.99 per hour surcharge for using the WorldPlay service, something that Kesmai claims decreased game usage by nearly 90 percent. AOL signed a three-year agreement with Kesmai in the beginning of 1996. Kesmai CEO Chris Holden is reported to have said that Kesmai will live or die based on the results of the lawsuit. He has claimed that AOL's Game Channel is the only place online where gaming companies are making money. According to Holden, gaming sites like TEN and Mplayer are struggling to survive. **http:\\www.aol.com/**

Lara Croft Pop Icon and Time Digital Honoree

LARA CROFT HAS HAD quite a year and a half since she crashed landed into Tomb Raider, first becoming a major pop icon, a favorite cover girl of gaming magazines and most recently making the Top 50 Shaker's List in the October/November issue of Time Digital. The list also included such notables, yet not as well endowed, movers as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Steve Case, Intel's Andy Grove and Oracle's Larry Ellison.

Ms. Croft was listed number 47 on Time's list, not bad for someone who isn't real (sorry boys, you knew she wasn't real, right?). However it was stated in the article that she has "broken the glass ceiling for video-game women but also created a sensation everywhere from Sony's Playstation to PCs."

Lara, who has appeared on countless magazine covers all over the world, was recently projected onto the state at U2's PopMart tour earlier this year and is back at work (she's the star of Tomb Raider 2). She had no official comment at press time. **http:\\www.eidos.com/**

http:\\www.eidos.com

Under *The* Wire

Under The Wire Under The Wire Under The Wire Under The Wire Under The Wire Under The Wire Under The

- Activision has announced its upcoming Dark Reign expansion pack – Rise of the Shadowhand coming in March 1998.
- The International Game Developers Network will have its first developers conference in Austin on March 13-14. Scheduled speakers include John Romero, Brian Moriarity, and Danni Berry
- Mindscape and Headland Digital Media are hosting a series of "Chessmaster Masterclasses" with 14-year old chess prodigy Josh Waitzkin, the subject of the Paramount motion picture "Searching for Bobby Fischer".
- ION Storm will be running a 3-part editorial series for those interested in getting into the computer games industry. Entitles "The Game within the Game" the series can be found in "Eye on Storm", the company's monthly on-line newsletter at www.ionstorm.com
- Trying to push PC gaming and hardware toward a larger mainstream market, Videologic, an international PC multimedia and 3D graphics company has signed a deal with HMV a large music and video retailer to supply graphic and sound cards to stores in the UK.

Voodoo can be Some Scary Stuff

3D ACCELERATION reaches new levels with Voodoo 2's 3Dfx chipset. The tech specs include 3 million triangles per second, 90 million dual-textured, bilinear filtered, per-pixel MIP-mapped, alpha-blended, Z-buffered pixels per second, 192-bit memory architecture, 2.2 gigabyte-per-second memory bandwidth, and 50 billion operations per second.

But the real news is this will provide gamers with an unbelievable 110fps in GLQuake at 640x480. In addition, consumers will be able to install two Voodoo 2 boards in the same PC. The chipsets will detect each other and function in a "Scan-line Interleave" mode, allowing the boards to share the workload and letting each card run at twice the speed for memory bandwidth of 4.3GB per second delivering 180 million pixels per second.

Ex-3D Realms Employees Decide to Do It Their Way

YET ANOTHER GROUP of 3D Realms former employees have branched out and formed their own company. The new development company will be based in Dallas, familiar 3D Realm Country, under the name Rebel Boat Rockers. The new company is already hard at work on its first product—a 3D shooter with only hardware rendering. Software giant Electronic Arts has already signed the publishing rights to the project, despite the fact the game doesn't even have a working title yet. The unnamed project should be hitting retail in time for Christmas of 1998.

www.rebelboatrocker.com

Billy Zelsnack, who worked on the yet unreleased Bombshell at 3D Realms, is one of the key defectors and his new game is based upon an entirely new 3D engine. The team, who's various member credit's include *Civilization*, *Duke Nukem 3D: Atomic Edition*, *Shadow Warrior* and *Rise of the Triad*, claims it will be faster than anything out there.
http://www.rebelboatrocker.com

News

Professional Gaming League Formed

GAMING MAY never be the same again now that the AMD Professional Gamers League has officially formed, opening a qualification period Total Entertainment Network-TM. The PGL is the first pro league specifically catering to the computer gaming crowd, and recently hired independent consultants for league operations support.

Gamers EXtreme and Clanring have been hired to help support the online and live portions of league operations. Gamers EXtreme, a Berkeley, California-based firm specializing in multiplayer gaming strategy guides and online news and information, will assist TEN PGL staff in the execution of various aspects of the day-to-day league operations. Clanring, a division of Idle Communications based in Seminole, Florida, will support TEN in managing the live, location-based final rounds and championship matches of each PGL season.

The inaugural season of the AMD Professional Gamers' League features Quake and Command and Conquer: Red Alert. To participate in the PGL, players must register for the PGL at **http://www. pgl.net/** and either subscribe to the TEN service or pay the PGL entry fee of $9.95 per three-month season.

C-3PO to speak in CD-ROM game

THE FIRST STAR WARS prequel is still some ways off in the distance (May of 1999, or some time that seems like it will never get here soon enough) but fans of the series can look forward to hearing C-3PO's voice in Star Wars Monopoly for Windows 95. Actor Anthony Daniels who supplied the voice for the annoying and rather high strung droid for the original trilogy of films was reportedly delighted to take part in the latest Star Wars product to make George Lucas even richer.
http://www.hasbro.com\

MEDIA BYTES
Traditional Media Meets New Media

by Karen Jones

WEBATHON

AN URGENT MESSAGE from Starfleet Command for all diehard Trekkers who can't get enough of the 24th century--how about enrolling in Starfleet Academy for the ultimate *Trek* experience? If this sounds like a near-Nexus dream, then beam over to the *Star Trek Continuum* website @ *startrek.msn.com*, the only "official" Paramount Trek site. Continuum not only offers a huge database of Trek info, live chats with stars like Jonathan Frakes, the latest *Trek* T.V and movie news and more, but now, with the launch of *Continuum 2.0*, gives you a virtual academy to revel in. The Starfleet Academy section of *Continuum* works hard to sustain the illusion of a temporal shift into the 24th century, where players take on the persona of Federation citizens, turned cadets. "The key to the Academy is to build a formal curriculum", Seth Skolnik, Superving Producer at Paramount Digital Entertainment told CGE, and adds " There will be enrollment, there will be lessons, there will be lectures, and work to do, of course all of this is fun and geared around *Star Trek*, but it's like going to college." When asked if you can flunk out, Skolnik replies "As long as your modem remains connected, I'm sure we'll find ways for you to stay in school." Let's hope *those* graduates get posted to deep, deep space...

Time to sharpen your swords and practice your war crys, because Xena and Hercules are thundering towards the online gaming world. Simutronics, designers of online hits *GemStone III* and *DragonRealms*, is teaming up with Universal Studios Online to develop a fantasy role-playing game based on television favorites "*Xena: Warrior Princess*", starring Lucy Lawless and "*Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*" with Kevin Sorbo. Tenatively called "*The Adventures of Hercules and Xena*", and taking place in an ancient mythic world where mere mortals can become heros by battling scores of villains and monsters, Executive Producer Elonka Dunin tells CGE that the online game "has been custom designed for the avid Hercules and Xena fan, and for the roleplaying enthusiast." She adds that players can look forward to learning more about the rough and ready dynamic duo by battling the same monsters they do, and outwitting countless traps and puzzles. As an added bonus, there are plans to have some hidden clues about upcoming television episodes within the game, and some possible series/gaming crossovers. Check out *HerculesXena.play.net* for updates, and as Xena would say, "IYI-YI-YI-YI!"

RACE CAR RALLY

When it comes to car racing, legend Mario Andretti and sons Michael and Jeff own the road. Now, EA Sports has released a PC version of its' top-selling *Andretti Racing*, and Mario tells CGE "Everybody wants to beat an Andretti in real life, and with this game you can take your shot." When asked how close the simulation was to the real thing, he replied, "It comes as close to anything I've seen, and it's a special treat for Michael, Jeff and myself to race against our friends and relatives because we can't ever do that in real life." Players, start your engines...

MOVIE MADNESS

Now that the karaoke craze has given even the tone-deaf their 15 seconds of pop star fame, it's time for... *Movioke*, Bandai's CD-ROM "party" game hosted by Dennis Miller. Up to four players can redub their own dialogue to dozens of two-minute movie scenes chosen from an irresistible selection of "classics" such as *Planet of Blood*, Ed Wood's *Glen or Glenda*, *Hercules Unchained*, and more. Miller serves as part guide, part director and part critic, and according to Jim Lambert of MediaSpan, who developed the title, "So much of Dennis' humor is movie-related. He's always shooting off a wicked Hollywood rant, and he acts in movies too. In short, he's the perfect host for *Movioke*." Roll em Dennis...

Another actor committed to education and currently lending his madcap talents to new media is Robin Williams, who reprises his 1992 film role as the hyperactive Genie for Disney Interactive's *MathQuest with Aladdin*, an animated adventure title designed for building math skills. According to Patrick Donohue, assistant manager of marketing and edutainment at Disney, "Genie is the favorite character from the film. He scores highest with children, and he really brings a whole new life to this game." He adds that Williams is hard to script for, so they gave him given free rein, basically because "most of his genius comes from ad-libbing." In fact, Williams had such a good time he brought friend and fellow comedian Jonathan Winters into the project. Winters plays a newly created character called "Spider."

TV TUNE-IN

HOLY MEGABYTES! Adam West, star of the '60s TV classic *Batman,* is taking on the villains again, *not* as the famed Caped Crusader, but as...the Galloping Gazelle in *Goosebumps: Attack of the Mutant,* DreamWorks Interactive's first person 3D action game. West, along with Jim Belushi, did voice-overs for *Goosebumps Attack,* which is based on the mega-selling books by R.L. Stine. When asked why he got involved, West told *CGE,* "They sent me the script, and I thought it was very entertaining and educational as well.... Then I read a few of the books and thought they were pretty good, Anytime you can get a child to read, isn't that good?" Yup, and West should know (he has six children).

One look at West's "Back to the Batcave" Website (www.adamwest.com) should tell you that he's relatively at peace with his alter ego and himself. "How many actors get a chance to create a character who becomes a classic? So I'm very grateful," says West. "People run after me in airports and ask, 'Hey, when are you coming back as Batman?' I just say, 'Maybe I'll come back as *Uncle* Batman!'" He's not kidding either and has a story in mind. Similar to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,* where Sean Connery showed up as Harrison Ford's dad, West wants to come back as Batman's uncle. In the meantime, he keeps busy with a variety of projects and has another CD-ROM out — a mystery title called *Golden Nugget,* released by Virgin Interactive.
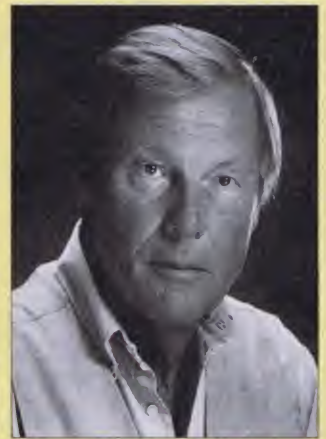
Beavis and Butt-head, the doltish duo of rude and crude, can no longer be seen regularly on MTV, but fans can look forward to more B&B fun and games in GT Interactive's forthcoming CD-ROMs, starting in 1998. Since this gaming news was announced before MTV disclosed the end of the boys' regular run, *CGE* asked Allyne Mills, vp of Corporate Communications at GT, if the cancellation had affected production of the games. "The end of the series has no effect on our plans," she replied, adding, "Beavis and Butt-head are world-renowned properties that we believe have great longevity." They also have quite an audience: No less than *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* Patrick Stewart told *Entertainment Weekly* that he watches the show obsessively. Hmmm, I wonder if Captain Picard would approve?

Guess who's coming to television? *MDK,* the hot third-person shooter which features Kurt Hectic as a skillful hero in skin-tight armor, will be adapted for an animated TV series, according to publisher Playmates Interactive and developer Shiny Entertainment. This is not the first time Playmates and Shiny have scored a television deal from one of their games — *Earthworm Jim* spawned an animated series and a line of action toys. Mainframe Entertainment (*ReBoot, Beast Wars*) will develop *MDK* for television, but at press time we know little about it except that fans of Kurt will learn move about his "motivation to battle evil." I think we can safely assume there's going to be more to it than that.

Meanwhile, Gary Rosenfeld, VP of development and business affairs at Playmates, told *CGE* that there are other *MDK* deals in the works. These include strategy guides for both PC and PlayStation games, as well as a sequel, which they'll start after the PlayStation release. Rosenfeld is particularly excited about the PlayStation version and promises "never-before-seen levels of gameplay which are exclusive to the PlayStation." As far as the sequel goes, he offers: "Just as Shiny was able to do with the original *MDK* , you can be sure that *MDK2* will contain new and unique features which will separate it from other action games."
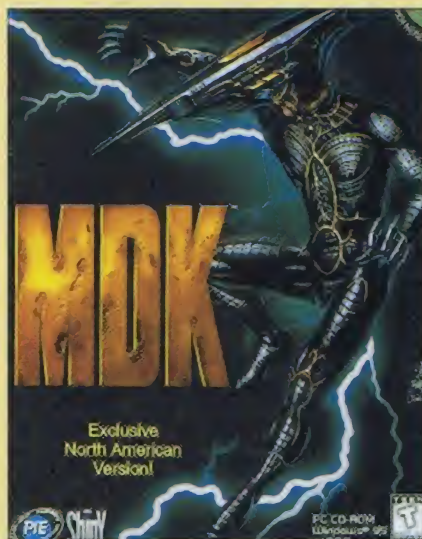
SPORTS STADIUM

Attention sports fans — you can now play the field all day, any day with *ABC's Monday Night Football '98* from ABC Interactive. Nancy Lamb, director of marketing at ABC Interactive, states that unlike other football titles, *Monday Night* is both a 'sim' and an action game. "It provides action gamers with plenty of excitement, while also acting as a robust 'sim' product to create the most realistic gameplay available in a PC game," she says. *Monday Night* features over 1,500 players from all 30 NFL teams, commentary from Al Michaels, Dan Dierdorf and Frank Gifford, Internet play, and downloadable weekly statistics. Also new from ABC is *ABC Sports College Football: Heros of the Gridiron,* where players can put together their own dream teams of famous college players — the good news, though, is that O.J. Simpson *isn't* on the roster.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

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  - ► FIRST LOOKS: ULTRA FIGHTERS, THEOCRACY, MALKARI, I-PANZER44 & GREAT BATTLES OF CAESAR
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The Best Role-Playing Game of 1998?

by Andy Backer

A First Look at Baldur's Gate

BALDUR'S GATE, A TSR-licensed Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Forgotten Realms CPRG (computer role-playing game), may very well be the best game of this sort to be released in 1998. We have several reasons for thinking so. For starters, it has a terrific story, it's TSR-licensed and it follows the AD&D rule set. Another plus is that BioWare, an enthusiastic developer with a brand new CRPG engine (The BioWare Infinity Engine'), has already produced some spectacular graphics. But our strongest reason for believing Baldur's Gate will be the top seller in the role-playing category in 1998 is because Interplay is producing it.

Taking a Dip in the Pool of Radiance

The Gold Box series, which TSR and SSI coproduced in the '80s, was an engaging set of role-playing games. Our favorite, Pool of Radiance, was the first AD&D Forgotten Realms story developed for a computer. The first thing that impressed us was being able to design our character's icons. Even though there wasn't much we could do except change the colors of the character's hair, shirt and pants, we were impressed that we were able to do so on a Commodore 64. We were also overjoyed that we could clean out monsters in the city one section at a time, and the sections stayed cleared — something we weren't used to in CRPGs.

The battles were also memorable. We would, at times, face wave after wave of charging monsters—often Kobolds. Although the battles could take hours to complete, they were very richly rewarded in experience points. The longest battle we ever fought was in Pool of Radiance's sequel, Azure Bonds. We tackled a nest of Beholders for an hour or so, placed the game in Autocombat mode and left to eat dinner. When we came back, the battle was still going on. We went out to a movie. The battle still hadn't been resolved by the time we returned. We went to bed, and in the morning we found that we had won.

The graphics move at a pretty decent frame rate.

Body in a Ditch

What we remember about Pool of Radiance most of all, however, was its moral ambiguity. It was the first CRPG to challenge our morality — without preaching. We had discovered a neat trick for getting advanced armor: hire an NPC that had a set and then kill him for it. The first time we did this, we were humbled when the game asked us if we wanted to throw his body into the ditch after we stripped him. The chilling, moral ambiguity of an adventurer's life had never been presented to us quite like that before. It's this kind of moral tension we look forward to in a TSR-licensed CRPG, and a major reason why we think *Baldur's Gate* may be a great game.

AD&D Rules

We also enjoy the AD&D rule set. It's the same one that pen-and-paper players follow, and it's been honed to perfection over the years. Games that use it provide wonderfully detailed manuals filled with facts and figures about character classes and professions; experience points needed for different levels; lists of weapons, armor, magic spells and monsters in the game — all the material that dedicated role-players love to read and study for hours.

Players can create only one player in *Baldur's Gate*. It may be an elf, dwarf, halfling, fighter or mage; it may be duel or multiclass. Character progression is only allowed to sixth level, but add on games will allow more.

Graphics to Dazzle and Amaze

For *Baldur's Gate*, artists at BioWare, the game's Canadian developer, have designed graphics that dazzle and amaze. The team members are all hardcore RPG players and are very enthusiastic about their work. The game will use 10,000 640x480 game screens, all rendered in 16-bit color. Every character, monster, costume, weapon and setting in the game has been meticulously
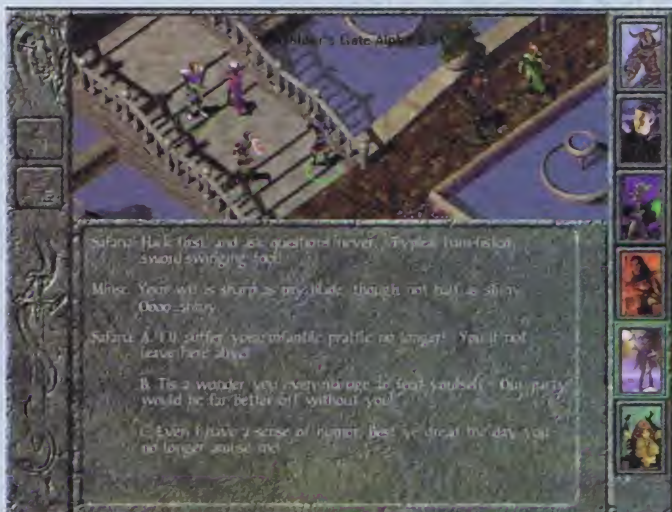
A Short Histroy of CRPG

ROLE-PLAY-ING BEGAN when Donald Kaye and Gary Gygax formed the game publishing company Tactical Studies Rules (TSR) and, in 1974, published the phenomenally successful Dungeons and Dragons, a pen-and-paper role-playing game in which friends pretend to be characters on a fantasy adventure. The player / Dungeon Master is equipped with a rulebook, dice and pen and paper to guide the others through the adventure. Each player chooses a race and a profession such as Dwarf Warrior or Elf Mage. They then roll dice to determine their characters' starting abilities. As the characters gain experience, mostly through imaginary combat, their abilities improve.

Computer programmers then created their own Dungeons and Dragons-type games. The first was *Ultima I*, published in 1980. *Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord* followed in 1981. These computer games are also called (erroneously, I think) role-playing games, but computer gamers don't enact their characters as D&D players do — like actors. They mostly watch while the computer does all the work, which involves no more role-playing than any other computer game genre in which players identify with their alter egos.

Interplay got into the CRPG business when it developed *The Bard's Tale: Tales of the Unknown* for Electronic Arts in 1985. It wasn't until 1988 that TSR collaborated with SSI and produced *Pool of Radiance*. It became a best seller, and a whole series of AD&D SSI games followed. SSI lost their AD&D license in 1994; Interplay happily picked it up in 1995.

One of the knight's who say "Ni"

A few concept drawings for Baldur's Gate

concepted, first in pencil, then in ink and then modeled for the computer.

Just the drawing of the city of *Baldur's Gate* alone takes up an entire wall at Bioware. It's roughly 7 1/2 x 8 feet and will use about 256 640x480 screens. The game will have dynamic lighting via luminosity maps. There will also be day-and-night cycles as well as rain, snow, fog and lightning effects.

What's the Story?

The story has multiple paths and a nonlinear plot. The adventure begins when a mentor leads the player's alter ego out of Candlekeep and into the wilds of the Sword Coast. The state of Amn is under siege to the south, the High Moor is being overrun in the north and Baldur's Gate is in turmoil. The region is running out of iron. Mercenaries have been hired to ambush iron transports. Magical spells can steal iron as soon as it leave the mines. When iron ore reaching the region is smelted, the resulting wares are plagued by such brittleness that they crack and break with little more than normal use

The armed factions in *Baldur's Gate* can scarcely keep themselves armed. And the commoners are suffering all the more. Without iron they cannot mend their tools or purchase plows — and if they cannot farm or craft, everyone will starve during the winter.

The player must put together a team of adventurers and eradicate the evil causing the blight before winter comes. This all makes for one terrific story and is another reason for our high expectations.

By Gamers, For Gamers

Again, our strongest reason for believing *Baldur's Gate* will be at least one of the top role-playing games in 1998 — if not the best — is that Interplay is producing it. The company's motto is BY GAMERS, FOR GAMERS. Its CEO, Brian Fargo, a dedicated role-playing gamer himself, picked up the TSR license because he admired the AD&D rule set.

Interplay's first AD&D Forgotten Realms adventure will be *Descent to Undermountain*, scheduled for release late in December. It was conceived as an action game which would use Interplay's Descent engine. The original concept has been changed somewhat, however, and Undermountain now looks like a pretty solid CRPG with strong action elements.

Baldur's Gate, from the beginning, was conceived of as an AD&D role-playing game which would stress game play and graphics over action (although the AD&D rules were modified to accommodate combat in real-time). Interplay is so confident that the product will do well, that an add-on sequel will be released three months after *Baldur's Gate* debut.
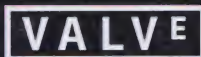
Lop Off Their Heads

by Andy Backer

A First Look at Die By The Sword

DIE BY THE SWORD, a spectacular, kick-ass combat/adventure game being developed by Treyarch and published by Interplay won't be released until February of 1998. The player's alter ego is a medieval warrior who wears chain mail and wields a sword that he uses to maim, cripple, or decapitate—the kind of game that makes a mother storm barricades in order to keep her children away from its excessive violence. As she should, no two buts about it, *Die By The Sword* is an extremely violent game—definitely not for youngsters (although oldsters may dearly love it).

In Arena Mode players may fight up to four opponents. Players may merrily decapitate heads, sever limbs and shed buckets of blood in Quest mode, also. They can even chop off and then pick up an opponent's severed limb and beat him to death with it! What fun, eh? Any player who loved the movie (or the game) *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* will probably laugh with delight when their alter egos have a leg cut off but continue to bravely fight on against an opponent with only one leg. Unlike the Black Knight, *Die By The Sword* characters can't sustain more than one lopped off limb without dying, but it is still a funny bit.

The Arena mode should provide *Die By The Sword* its longevity, but Treyarch hopes that its Quest mode will make the game

This Orc is a stupid creature—and it eats like a pig

Our hero is a handsome warrior, but he needs a shave.

competitive with other action/adventure games. The developer has created seven intriguing levels and filled them puzzles, floating rafts, collapsing floors, swinging pendulums, whirling blades, swinging rope traps as well as twenty different types of monsters including Kobolds, Orcs, Ogres, and Trogs.

Kobolds are half-human, half-dog mixes that populate the upper caves of the catacombs. Armed with swords and spears, what

they lack for in strength they make up for in numbers. Kobolds may seem cowardly when they flee from approaching humans, but more than likely they are just trying to lure them into a trap or ambush.

Orcs have the worst traits of both of their ancestors—humans and wild boars. Lacking intelligence and grace, they make up for it with brute force. One swipe from their heavy battle-axes can kill. Orcs will sometimes eat the corpses of their victims—the pigs. They also take on Kobold slaves. Skeletons have no fear, no compassion and no remorse. What they've got are sharp swords that can slice, dice and chop. Their shields effectively block many player attacks. These leaping devils' bones don't bleed, but turn green when hit.

Troglodytes are the scourges of underground rivers and lakes, Trogs kill without distinction, driven by hunger to eat all that they kill, and they are strong, quick, and nearly invulnerable in water. Trogs do not use human weapons, preferring brute strength and sharp claws to tempered steel.

Other, stronger creatures are assigned to the deeper and progressively more difficult levels. On level four, for example, the player will encounter not only an Orc Captain, Mantis, Orc Shaman, Ogre and Mutant but a tentacled beast capable of picking the player's adventurer up and throwing him against the wall.

The main difference between *Tomb Raider* and *Die By The Sword* is that *Tomb Raider's* combat system is basically just point and shoot, whereas *Die By The Sword* players can even target specific parts of a monster's anatomy with a variety of different sword strokes.

The two games are alike in that they both use a physics model

for animation instead of motion capture. Peter Akemann, creator of the VSIM computer technology used in *Die By The Sword* has a Ph.D. in Mathematics and has been working on his game engine for five years. He says that it is based on the physics of a human body and calculates the possible range of joint motion in the arms, legs, head and torso of each character in real-time.

Whether players want their characters to swing their swords in a big arc in front of themselves, or to slice, slash or stab, the VSIM engine allows them to do so with fluid control. They are allowed an infinite variety of violent attack as well as cowardly defensive moves. Characters will react as if they were realistically being bashed in the head or gutted by a large, sharp heavy sword. It's just a matter of the VSIM correctly calculating the effects of mass, inertia, and angular momentum (heh-heh).

Because of it, players will need to practice a lot more than in conventional fight games. But Akemann believes that players have fun learning new control methods and that the new skills they pick up keep them practicing—and talking to their friends about what a great game they're playing. And we all know what positive word of mouth can do for sales.

The game also features multi-player action, a move editor, a fast 3D-polygon engine, and an interactive background. Multiplayer action is basically using modems to play games with up to four different friends in Arena mode. Players can use the traps in the arena to their advantage. An opponent backed into a lava pit is as helpless as if you had hacked his legs off.

Each of the races in the game has it's own unique set of attributes. This Japanese Warrior is especially adept with a Katana.

In order to create crushing combinations of moves, players may use the move editor. It takes advantage of Akemann's VSIM physics engine by letting players create and save their trickiest maneuvers. Any swing of the sword, and leap or somersault may be pre-programmed and recalled with the touch of a single key. Players may also chain pre-made moves together to create devastating combos.

This skeleton is a formidable fighter - plus he's nude!

Selectable camera options are made possible by the games faster-than-a -speeding-bullet 3D polygon engine. It also supports 3D cards, full 3D polygonal characters (much better looking than the skinny flat kind), dynamic and uneven terrain, volumetric lightning as well as full texture mapping (so those full 3D polygon characters won't run around nekked).

The game's interactive background allows characters to be snared by rope traps and hang upside down while creatures beat them to death. Players can also set off other kinds of traps besides rope snares. Small holes in the ceiling, walls, or floor may mean that there are spears or poison darts dead ahead and a discoloration in the floor may hint that the player is about to fall into a concealed pit. Characters may somersault across chasms, dive under closing gates and board rafts that float down streams in order to flip wall switches that open up secret doors. They may also grapple with adverse conditions such as fog, lightning, and darkness.

An interactive background can also be helpful as well as harmful. If players thoroughly explore the dark dampness of the catacombs they just might find plants that can heal a wounded warrior. They can use hilly terrain to gain height over their opponents and they can put their backs against walls to keep monsters from attacking them from behind.

Players who have previously been afraid to play twitch type fighting games on their PCs because the control system wasn't as good as console versions should welcome this more cerebral fighting game. It relies on thoughtful combinations and more realistic fighting moves and damage.

The game will play in Windows 95 or DOS; support both high and low graphic resolutions' major 3D cards such as 3DFX; mouse, keyboard and joystick controls as well as Sidewinder Force Feedback Joystick effects such as sword inertia and sword collisions. The frame rate will be fixed at 18 frames per second.

Our preview disk indicates that *Die By The Sword* already has most of its ducks in a row and that the final release version will be very competitive with all of the major combat/adventure type games on the market. It already looks better than most of them. CGE

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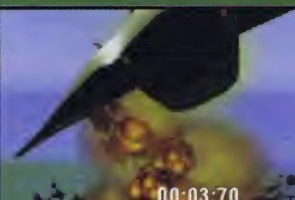
Don't fear the Reaper

by Andy Backer

A First Look at Grim Fandango

WHAT DO MANIACS, motorcycles, monkeys and tentacles have in common? The answer is Tim Shafer, who has participated in either designing or programming for LucasArts the hot comic adventure games *Maniac Mansion, Day of the Tentacle,* the first two *Monkey Islands,* and *Full Throttle.*

His next adventure game, *Grim Fandango,* takes the gamer on a four-year tour through the Land of the Dead. What's so funny about that, you ask? Before playing *Full Throttle,* what did you think was so funny about motorcycle gangs? Tim has an ability to make us laugh at the bogie man. He's especially attracted to the bizarre. and uses his sense of humor to transform it into the familiar. His adventures are not only witty and fun to play; they can leave you rolling on the floor with laughter.

Tim was facinated with the idea that, in Mexican culture, the dead take a four-year journey through The Land of the Dead, after learning about it in a folklore class at UC Berkely. The professor noted that to fully enjoy the journey, Mexicans believed it was best to bring along a little something to bribe the officials. Thus, before beginning the journey, the superstitious lined their coffins with money.

The idea that corruption continues even after death was the inspiration for *Grim Fandango.* Tim's story is about Manny Calavera, a travel agent who works for the Department of Death. His dead-end job is selling boat and train tickets to dead souls wealthy enough to buy their way around the four-year walk or swim across the Land of the Dead.

By stealing a colleague's client, to meet a sales quota, Manny sets off a chain of events that not only threatens his job, but the eternal destiny of his soul. At the core of Manny's struggle, is the concept of the passage of an innocent through a dark and perilous realm, towards redemption.

Wow dude, lets challenge death to a game, most excellent idea.

What's classic film noir without showing a little leg?

Manny's struggle is also the theme of classic films such as *Chinatown, Casablanca,* and *The Big Sleep.* A fan of film noir, Tim combines that genre's mystery and intrigue with the exotic nature of the Mexican mythology he learned in his folklore class.

Graphically, Grim Fandango differs from LucasArts' previous adventure games, including its upcoming release of *Curse of Monkey Island.* It will have pre-rendered, computer drawn 2D backgrounds, and real-time 3D characters. A realistic human figure is restricted at times to a low poly count in 3D. Tim was aware of this when he chose a simplistic art form for the game.

Peter Chan stylized the 3D artwork by depicting the game's characters as Day of the Dead skeletons, giving the game a unique look—macabre and yet comic. Chan used a combination of Aztec, Mayan, and Art Deco sources for the game's architecture. He also wildly exaggerated the game's vehicles in a style reminiscent of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's outrageous hot-rods of the 1960's.

"Grim Fandango is the most ambitious graphic adventure that LucasArts has ever developed," says Barbara Gleason, product-marketing manager for LucasArts. "Tim Schafer has successfully undertaken a different approach to Grim Fandango by turning the technical limitations of 3D into an art style."

Grim Fandango features more than 50 mysterious characters and 90 locations. The game is divided into four acts. In Act One, Manny sells his tickets and steals a client. In Act Two Manny hijacks an ocean liner. He is confined to an underwater prison in Act Three, and in Act Four he makes his way to a snow-covered Mayan temple and then home again.

Glottis, an elemental spirit, tags along as his driver and mechanic. Because the game takes place over a four years, characters go through major transitions. Grim Fandango is not scheduled to be released until Spring 1998. ███

CGE interviews with Tim Shafer

CGE: What does the title mean?
TS: A Fandango is a "lively Spanish dance." Moreover, *Grim Fandango* is just supposed to be a thought provoking oxymoron that represents the feeling of the game, you know? A happy little jig performed by gloomy specters of death.

CGE: I understand that *Grim Fandango* is inspired by Mexican folklore. What is the folktale? What does the "Day of the Dead" have to do with it?
TS: *Grim Fandango* is inspired by the folklore of ancient Mexico, where it was believed that there were nine planes underground where the dead remained. The final destiny of each individual was determined by the way he or she died. People who died in combat went to the plane of the sun god; those who died in water went to the plane of the water god. However, those who were not selected by the gods went to the dark plane of Mictlan, where they begin a four-year journey to the ninth underworld, the land of eternal rest. This journey has many perils and just seemed perfect for an adventure game.

Once a year, however, the dead are invited back to the land of the living to "enjoy the aroma and the image" of the foods and objects that they loved in life. This is the "Day of the Dead." Therefore, for the characters of *Grim Fandango*, it's just like a vacation day. They get off work and get to see their families.

CGE: How does your adventure vary from the folktale? What parts of the tale have you used in your story?
TS: Well, it may seem like we added a lot of far-out stuff—guns, casinos, hot-rod dragsters—but not really. The Land of the Dead is a dark mirror of the land of the living, so it's appropriate for it to have basically anything we want in it. We have many anachronistic elements in the game like art deco architecture and '60s custom car design, but we also lifted a lot of our look straight from the folklore. For example, our characters don't look like realistic human skeletons; they look like the paper mache figures called "Calaveras" that are sold in Mexico. These are usually used to depict everyday events like getting a haircut or getting married—but the people are represented by by skeletons. Itwas the desire to bring these paper mache figures to life that led to the idea of making this game, actually.
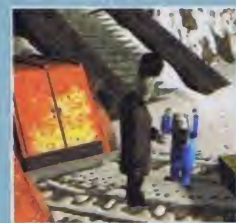
CGE: Why are you combining the folktale with the hard-boiled private eye mystery genre?
TS: Well, when explored, the folklore reveals many tales of treachery and injustice. Families would bury bags of gold with the bodies of their deceased loved ones, but they would place one bag on top of the body, and one hidden in the lining so

The Day of the Dead festival inspired Peter Chan's artwork.

that other souls wouldn't steal it upon it's arrival in the Land of the Dead. That idea—that low behavior doesn't end with life—opens the door to many story opportunities.

CGE: Is Manny (your hero) a true hard-boiled private or just a mystery detective?
TS: Neither. Manny is a travel agent. He just wants to get by, maybe a little better than the next guy. However, he maybe reaches a little too far and gets himself in a whole lot of trouble. Film noir is not just about detectives. One of the best film noir movies of all time, *Double Indemnity*, is about an insurance agent who, like Manny, gets a little greedy and finds himself in way over his head.

CGE: What is Manny's objective in the story?
TS: He just wants to get out of the Land of the Dead, but he's got to work off his time first. He must sell premium travel packages to people crossing the land, and thereby earn his way out of purgatory. However, he doesn't seem to be getting anywhere, so he steals a colleague's client, and that's when all his troubles really begin.

CGE: Is this a puzzle oriented adventure? If so, are they *7th Guest* type puzzles?
TS: One of the most critical elements in our game design philosophy is that the puzzles are woven as seamlessly as possible into the story, and more than that, into the nature of the characters and the setting of the game. In Full Throttle, the solutions to puzzles often involve Ben kicking something or hitting something because he was a tough character. Manny's solutions would be different, and appropriate to his character. I really don't like games where you're wandering down a hallway, watching some beautiful pre-rendered 3D or some cheesy video, and then you come upon a door that's locked-oh my gosh-it's locked with a Rubik's Cube! Give me a break. It all has to make sense or it doesn't feel real, and it's not immersive.

CGE: What's so funny about the Land of the Dead?
TS: Inherently, nothing. That's the challenge, don't you think?
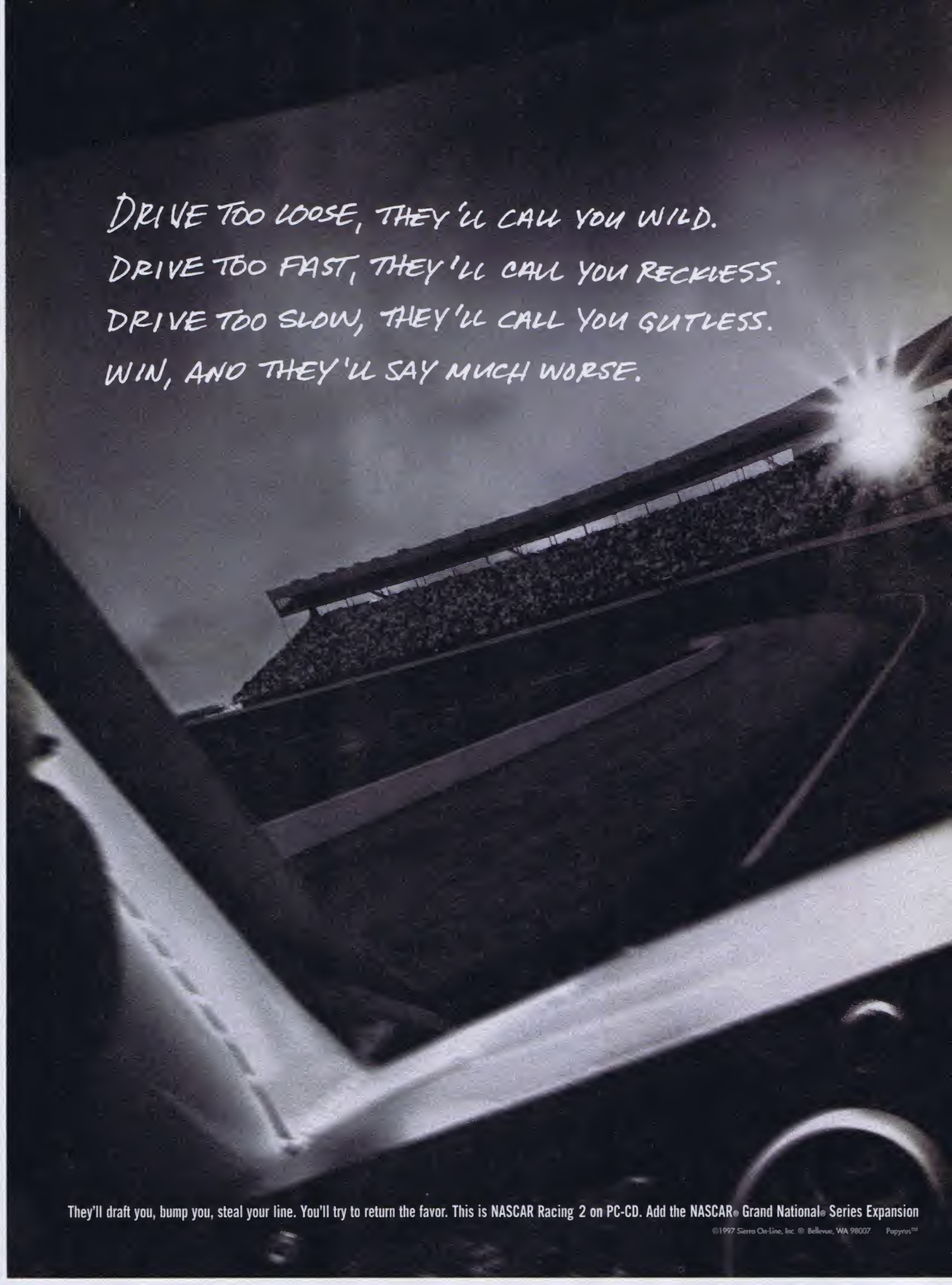
CGE: Why isn't this story depressing?
TS: Because it's not about death or dying or grief or loss. Everybody's already dead, so the sad stuff's over before the game begins. It's about a self-contained world filled with people whose souls are trapped—and their struggle to bring themselves to a better place.

CGE: Does the story have a moral? If so, what is it?
TS: Pick up everything you can. Save often.

DRIVE TOO LOOSE, THEY'LL CALL YOU WILD.
DRIVE TOO FAST, THEY'LL CALL YOU RECKLESS.
DRIVE TOO SLOW, THEY'LL CALL YOU GUTLESS.
WIN, AND THEY'LL SAY MUCH WORSE.
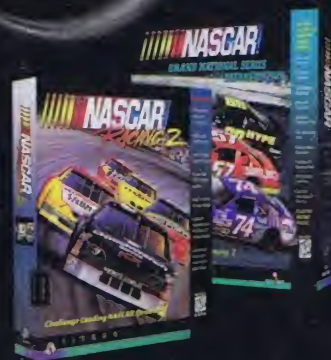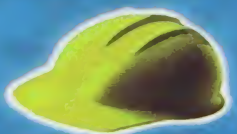
Babes in Arms

by Andy Backer

A First Look at Messiah

MESSIAH, THE NEW action/adventure game being developed by Shiny Entertainment is not scheduled for release until the first quarter of 1998—but it is already controversial. The hero of this shoot 'em up (the player's alter ego) could metaphorically be taken for Jesus. David Perry denies any resemblence (see the David Perry interview) but the game's title is enough to make it a target for the Christian Right.

David Perry, the President of Shiny Entertainment, is known for quirky, oddball games such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Aladdin, Cool Spot, Earthworm Jim, and MDK. He is somewhat quirky and oddball himself, or at least tries to cultivate that image in his interviews. His height is unusual (6'8"), and his life story is atypical. Born in Ireland, he moved to London at 17, achieved almost instant success as a game designer, and was lured to California where he formed his own company, Shiny Entertainment. Shiny created Earthworm Jim and then released the blockbuster action hit, MDK. Messiah is the next game in the Shiny pipeline and, it may well be another blockbuster.

Perry, who is just twenty-some years old, grew up in a tiny Irish town with "no shops, no bars, no arcades and no cinemas. Just a Church." He now lives in a 6,500 square feet house overlooking the ocean. The American Dream? Yes, except David is Irish.

Perry doesn't want to talk about the religious aspects of Messiah except to emphasize that the game's angelic super-hero is not Jesus—just a Messiah named Bob. He also says that the dictionary defines Messiah as "a savior of the oppressed." That is the only context in which Perry is using the word.

Messiah's premise is that the world will end after the seven seals that keep the powers of heaven and hell from direct contact with Earth have been broken. Therefore, the seven seals have been hidden away. But the powers of Hell have sent a secret emissary to Earth in an attempt to win the battle of Armageddon before Heaven can react. The angels retaliate by creating Bob in an experimental laboratory and sending him to destroy Hell's emissary and restore the status quo.

Although its just a screen shot here the real 3D rendering is amazing.

Oh, daddy where are you daddy, my nappy needs changing and my wings need fluffing.

Bob may be just a cherub but he is a super-hero—with the ability to fly and to possess people. Players may end up playing twenty different characters with different weapons. Which characters to possess, and at what points in the game Bob must possess them, are puzzles the player has to solve.

Perry is most proud of the technology behind Messiah. He claims that, with the exception of 3Dfx, Messiah runs even faster than most 3D hardware. It pushes the number of polygons per second 500 to 1000 more than Tomb Raider. MDK used 150 to 300 polygons per model, which is the industry norm. Messiah, however, begins with 580,000 and scales back from there. The software determines the speed of the player's CPU and takes out or adds polygons, accordingly. The frame rate never changes.

The secret is that the models aren't stored as polygons, but as shapes, which allows extra processor time for making them look as detailed as possible on screen. The unprecedented level of realism allows for skeletal models to be covered with flesh without any skin disruptions, even while they move. A more sophisticated texture mapping also allows the models to appear realistic from any angle—not just from the front and back. All the characters have also been motion-captured (filming similar sized actors dressed in a special body suits) to enhance the computer animations.

The new technology allows a variety of details—for example arrows or other objects stab characters, and remain embedded, while he or she runs around wounded. Since the game is still several months away from completion, there will surely be many more delightful surprises, as programmers and designers continue to take advantage of all of the possibilities within the realm Perry has created.

Whatever their innovations, indications are that Messiah's amazing 3D engine, quirky, oddball story and controversial hero, will make the game the most anticipated release of 1998. CGE

Interview with David Perry

CGE: How did the success of Aladdin affect your life?

DP: I think of camel dung in a whole new way now.

CGE: Why did you decide to create your own company, Shiny Entertainment, and leave Virgin after Aladdin?

DP: People kept calling me a virgin.

CGE: Who comes up with the ideas for your games?

DP: We owe it all to Nancy, the wonderful lady that cleans our office.

CGE: Describe yourself in ten words.

DP: Tall, tall, tall, tall, tall, tall, tall, tall, and thin.

CGE: Is Bob the Second Coming of Christ?

DP: No. He's the Fourth Coming of Shiny.

CGE: Do you think that the Jesus as super-hero concept may be somewhat controversial?

DP: Jesus as super-hero? Well, I guess that he was certainly that in many ways. One of the first! Nevertheless, Jesus isn't in this game. If you look the word Messiah up in the dictionary it means 'savior of the oppressed', and that's the context that we're using the word in. We're not deliberately courting controversy. 'Bob', the cherub, has to save the world, so we call the game Messiah.

CGE: What do you think of the Christian Right?

DP: They have a right to express their views, just like anyone else.

CGE: Do you like controversy?

DP: It can be fun, but if it gets taken too far by those reacting to it, it becomes a problem. Sometimes people forget that we're making games—manufacturing fun, not running a political or religious group!

CGE: Do you think any of Shiny's other games are controversial?

DP: Not really. Fun, yes, but controversial? No, but I suppose anyone can find controversy in anything if they look hard enough.

CGE: What is the big structure that Bob flies around in?

DP: It's a city. A dark, dystopic, futuristic city. Each level is absolutely enormous, and the programmers have gone to great lengths to ensure that Bob's environment is as strange and as dark and as exciting as possible - and that it really lives and breathes as a city lives and breathes.

CGE: Is there any correspondence with reality in the game? Alternatively, is everything symbolic?

DP: I guess you could say that the designers, particularly Mike Damien, who's designing the levels, has been heavily influenced by contemporary cities such as LA and Tokyo. Apart from that, it's all imaginary, and the religious symbolism is a lot less evident than I think people would like to believe.

CGE: Why are there prostitutes in the game?

DP: For the same reasons that there are police in the game. Messiah is a title for adults, and the cities in the game have to look and feel like real cities. Remember that the Devil has already taken these places for himself, and so vice and violence and evil are bound to be in evidence—hence the prostitute.

CGE: Why do some of the characters have full suits of armor? Are they from Hell?

DP: No, but they are possessed, and the cities are futuristic and fantastical, so many of the characters wear strange and sometimes odd-looking outfits.

CGE: Will the characters have changing relationships with other characters?

DP: The AI is such that they will certainly react to each-other, but they won't be forming friendships exactly, or caring that much about one-another. No, Messiah isn't a role playing game.

CGE: Is the game primarily an arcade game for adults? Alternatively, is it an action/adventure?

DP: The adventure comes from exploring and completing the levels, and the action from using the various bodies that you possess to fight your way to victory. The puzzles that you will see will be environment puzzles, and you will have to use your possession ability to solve them. For example, you might need to possess a guard to slip past a checkpoint without being attacked. Messiah is a mature game for a mature audience, that's true. It does have a certain amount of gritty realism.

CGE: What are you most proud of about the game?

DP: At the moment, I'm proud of the team and of the technology that they've developed. At least two years ahead of anyone else, which makes me very proud.

CGE: Is there anything else you'd like players to know about the game?

DP: It will be available on PlayStation and PC in the Spring '98, and it's going to make a lot of other developers feel very sick when they see it! They'll be scratching their heads for months trying to figure out how we did it.

The First Deadly Sin

By John Altman

A First Look at SIN

YOU'VE BEEN RIVETED to your computer for hours, playing the hot new first-person shooter and trying to get farther than the guy who works in the cubicle next to you. The end of the level is in sight, but you're pinned down by a vicious cross-fire. Finally, when all other options have been exhausted, you take courage (and machine-gun) firmly in hand and make a desperate dash for the finish line. As luck would have it, you're not quite fast enough — a brief volley of well-aimed enemy fire leaves you expiring in a puddle of your own blood. It's not the first time, and it probably won't be the last.

How does it feel? Frustrating, to be sure, but wouldn't it be something if you also felt something more? Wouldn't it be something to play a first-person shooter that featured real characters, so the dedicated player could make some sort of emotional connection with the gameplay?

The goal of Ritual Entertainment, creators of the upcoming *Sin* (due in early 1998), is to make this dream a reality. The past couple of years have offered first-person shooters targeted at every conceivable taste and market niche, but Ritual is gambling that one audience has been overlooked — that of the intelligent and discerning gamer who wants a little context with his bloodshed. Ritual hopes to offer an adrenaline-filled adventure featuring realistic characters, atmospheric settings, and a story that reacts to player's choices. In other words, they hope to offer an action game that improves the action by tweaking just about everything else. Three-dimensional characters and first-person shooters may seem like mutually exclusive concepts, but Ritual is determined to challenge the conventional wisdom. *Sin's* two lead characters, protagonist Colonel John R. Blade and antagonist Elexis

Sin's level of detail is stunning

Sinclair, come with fully-developed backstories — Blade is a super-cop with a past, Elexis a misguided biochemist distributing the addictive drug Dyforsanide through her company SinTech. "Most games are lacking in story concept these days, or they tell a story that happens before the game begins," says Michael Hadwin, Art Director for Ritual Entertainment. "Sin has taken a different approach. We explain the history of our characters in compete detail before the game starts, then uncover a twisted story as the game progresses."

The ambitious plot, which evokes a Robocop-type future in which the government has contracted private law-enforcement to help deal with a surge in criminal activity, sounds more like a Hollywood blockbuster than a video game. The year is 2097, and John Blade, leader of the strike team HARDCORPS, is tracing Dyforsanide (known on the street as "U4") to its source, a company called SinTech. SinTech is owned by the brilliant and painfully sexy Elexis Sinclair. Along the way Blade will traverse six regions which promise to be more immersive and interactive than those offered by any 3D shooter to date.

All the levels are connected logically.

"Instead of using a different theme per level, we've decided to create a series of levels based around distinct environments," Mr. Hadwin says. "Each world region should have four to five levels (though some secret missions may have only one or two levels). I feel people can relate to realistic environments much more easily than they can relate to fantasy, so *Sin* will be set in very realistic levels that are highly interactive. Example: A large machine is chugging away in the corner. You walk up to the machine and throw a lever switch, and a

Not OCP HQ, but an incredible simulation

to spill all the beans about Sin, for understandable reasons. The competition to be the Next Big Thing in first-person shooters is stiff. Quake II has hype on its side, while *Half-Life* promises some truly dazzling AI. Mr. Hadwin, however, is confident that *Sin* will find a place on shelves and in gamer's hearts.

"We are using every trick in our bag of magic to truly wow the players. We plan on making *Sin* a whole new experience each time you play it. We've taken a great base foundation and are building a whole new experience on top of that. The enhancements to the engine, the intricate interactivity, the depth of the story and the action-based outcomes are what will draw you into our universe. You may never want to leave — at least until *Sin 2* comes out."

The engine to which he refers is a highly modified version of the *Quake* engine. The engine is so highly modified, in fact, as to be almost unrecognizable. "We have completely overhauled the level editor," says Mr. Hadwin, "and incorporated a

conveyer belt starts up. Suddenly, a machine behind you kicks on and starts spitting out metal parts that travel down the conveyer belt. A robot arm swings down and picks up the metal parts and places them in a hole in a wall. So you have to ask yourself: 'Do I jump on the conveyer belt and explore where these parts are being sent, or do I turn and haul ass to the next room?' Either action you take will effect the gameplay and add to an overall better gaming experience."
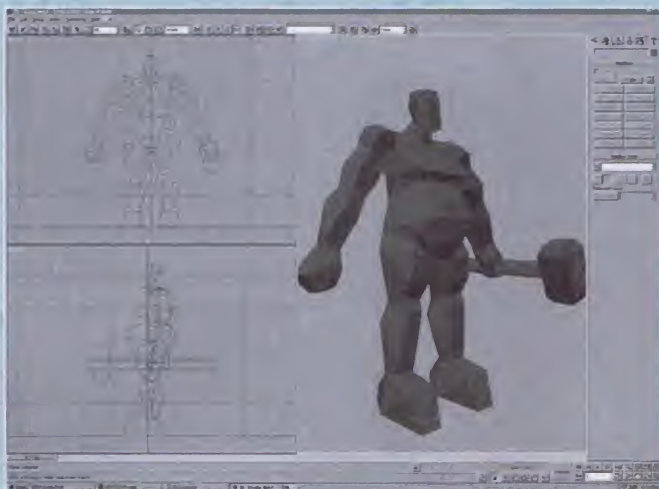
skeletal mesh deformation animation system for characters, added 16-bit color for a much richer palette, colored lighting, translucency, masking of textures, vehicles that you can drive, and several more I'd like to keep a surprise."

Rumors that Ritual has had access to the *Quake II* engine, Mr. Hadwin admits, have no basis in reality. "Despite what you may have heard, all companies that licensed the engine are currently using the original *Quake I* engine. John Carmack will not release the *Quake II* source until *Q2* is out and on the retail shelves. Even then, I believe it is up to his discretion when the *Q2* code will be released. No one has Quake II engine code yet except id software. We will take advantage of the *Q2* source code once it is available to us."

Ritual may have tweaked the *Quake* engine beyond recognition, but they're not the only company to have taken this model as their starting point (*Half-Life* also started, and extensively fiddled with, the *Quake* engine). The idea of character-driven action, while definitely palatable to us, may not translate as a strong selling point. So what — beyond the aforementioned, and not insignificant, improvements — will guarantee Sin a place in the marketplace?

"We'll include a hundred bucks in each box of Sin," Mr. Hadwin says with a wink.

The idea of players' actions directly affecting gameplay is central to Ritual's concept for *Sin*. "A major feature that will set *Sin* apart from others is the in-game story, which can change drastically based upon your actions. In Sin, the player controls the progression and overall outcome of the story. You are in control of your own destiny."

Although the environments are realistic, the world of Sin is steeped in sci-fi trappings — including, but certainly not limited, to Robocop. When we asked Mr. Hadwin what some of the primary influences were, he was hard put to come up with a simple answer. There were, it seems, just too damn many of them.

"The idea of experimentation with human genetics fascinates us," he says. "But listing everyone's personal influences would take a long, long time. I can tell you that the group at Ritual are influenced by action/sci-fi movies, books, and classic games."

If this answer seems evasive, it's not alone; Ritual is reluctant

One wrong shot could bring this whole level down.

Battle zone
The Past as Prologue

by Allen Rausch

The enormous popularity of nostalgia products shows how far the Interactive Enertainment Industry has come. In fact, there is an entire generation of consumers in their late 20's and early 30's for whom names like Space Invaders and Joust bring back the same warm and fuzzy memories that Howdy Doody and The Lone Ranger do for their parents. The folks at Activision seem to understand this almost instinctively. That's why Battlezone, their hottest new nostalgia project, shows just how powerful cutting-edge graphics and gameplay can be when combined with a name that carries this much history.
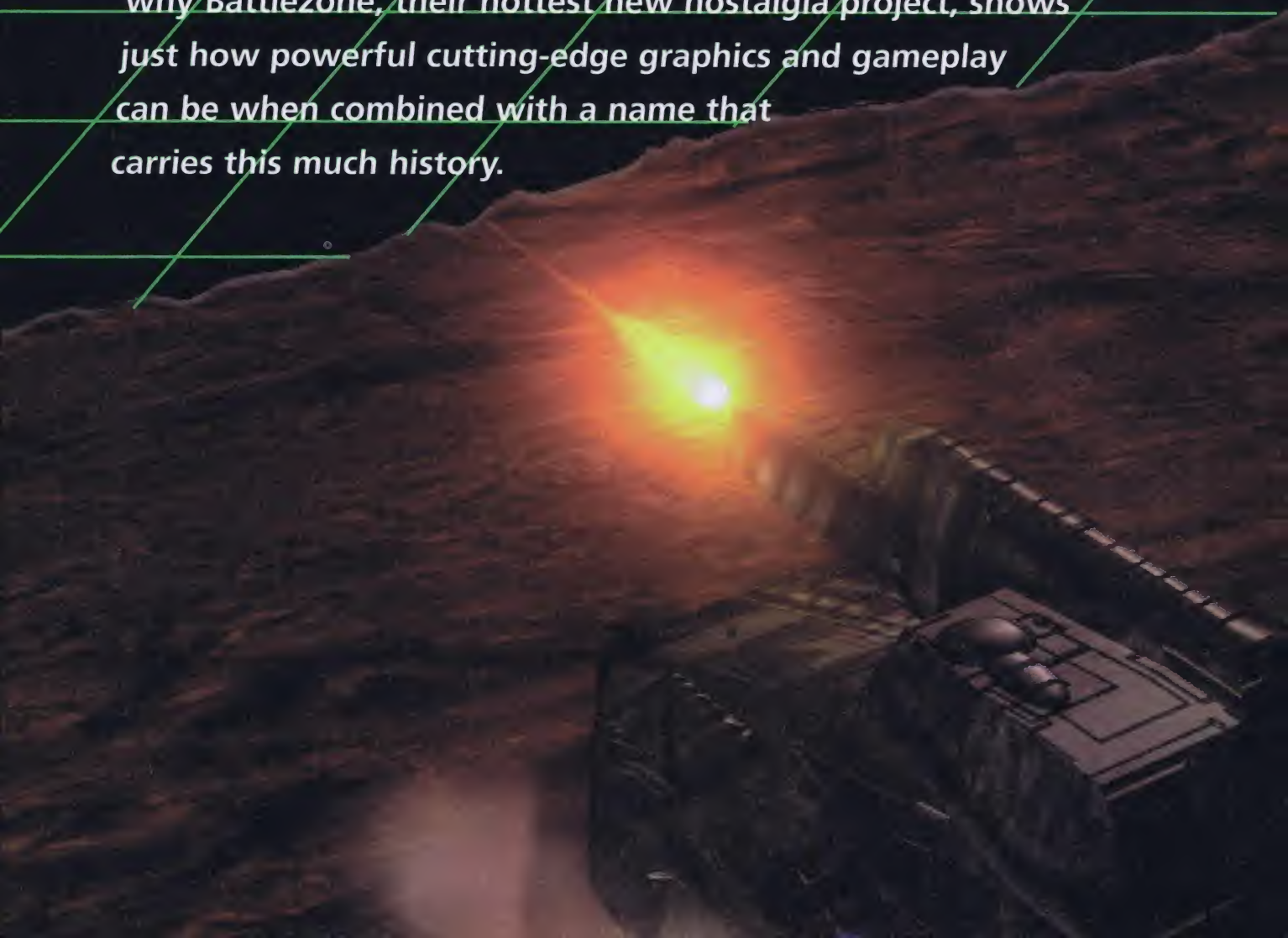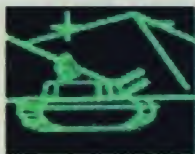
THE FIRST THIRD PARTY developer for the Atari 2600, Activision was responsible for such classic games as *River Raid* and *Kaboom!* But Activision lost its vision during the "dark years," when it was known as Mediagenic. Mediagenic dabbled unsuccessfully in everything from music programs to productivity packages. It wasn't until the resurrection and re-vamping of classic titles like *Zork* and *Pitfall* and others that were gathering dust, that the company managed to pull itself out of chapter 11 bankruptcy in the early 90's. Now, riding high off of such hits as *Mechwarrior II* and and *Interstate '76*, the staff at Activision has an almost manic determination to use old titles to create new magic on the retail shelves.

When lead director Andrew Goldman began working on a futuristic 3D tank game, yanking the name from Ed Rothstein's classic seemed almost inevitable. "The name *Battlezone* gives us something to shoot for." Goldman explained, "*Battlezone* was the first 3D game - ever. If we're going to use the name, then the product has to be as revolutionary as the original was 17 years ago." Based on what was shown to CGE, Goldman and company just might pull it off.

The new *Battlezone* hopes to revive the currently over-cloned and creatively dead real-time strategy genre by combining it with action games, a genre that has just recently come into its own on the PC. As Mike Arkin, producer for the project explained: "The original game, great as it was, was action alone, something that just doesn't cut it today. If you're going to push the envelope, you need more. Think about some great recent games - *Tomb Raider* - action plus adventure, *Diablo* - action plus RPG, *Mechwarrior II* - action plus simulation. All of them gave the player something extra. We looked at these games and thought "No one's ever been able to successfully merge action and strategy.' So that's what we're doing with *Battlezone*."

You've got your action game in my strategy game!

Arkin describes *Battlezone* as 30 percent strategy and 70 percent action. The gamer plays a general controlling the movement of troops, and the placement of constructors, defensive emplacements and resource gathering units on a 3D battlefield. Rather than staring at your units from an overhead perspective, the game

Before (The classic Battlezone)

After (The new and improved Battlezone)

places you on the battlefield in a futuristic hovertank responsible for fighting as well as action. Arkin emphasized the important role gameplay balancing and mission design will play in the final product. "We wanted to make sure that you wouldn't be able to get through the game without utilizing both the strategic and action portions of the game," he said. "In one of the early missions, you'll have to retrieve an important object some distance from your starting point. While you're doing that the Soviets launch an attack on your base. You simply won't have enough time to retrieve the object and still make it back to your base to defend it. You're going to have to use the strategic element to set up a decent

defensive perimeter."

How will Activision marry such disparate genres as action and strategy? The answer (taking a cue from the original) is the radar screen. Although every game manufacturer boasts of "innovation" and "pushing the envelope" *Battlezone's* interface gives you the thrill you can only get when you see something truly new for the first time. It's the feeling of being present at history in the making.

The transparent radar screen has an extraordinarily detailed 3D topographical map of the entire terrain. The radar is then linked to transparent drop-down HUD-style menus. Color coded actions are highlighted on the menus and lines attach unit
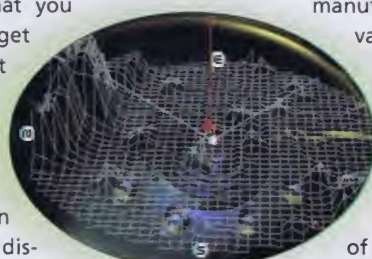
markers on the radar with their "real" 3D counterparts on the screen. Orders are given by pressing a series of keys, while the tank is driven and fired using the mouse. It sounds awkward, but the interface is so elegant that I was able to find my way around and give orders to my units after only about 10 minutes of practice (and I'm not exactly most agile person in the world).

Andrew Goldman explained *Battlezone*'s interface design philosophy by saying that the solution was obvious once they turned the problem of genre disparity upside down. "There's never been an action meets strategy game because no one has ever been able to figure out how to join the two elements," he said. If you're controlling a lot of units in a strategy game, and then you have to jump to a first person perspective action game, you lose the fun of strategy games, the situational awareness and the ability change your unit's orders to react to the changing battlefield. Let's say you're playing an action game and you have jump out into a tactical mode. Does time stop? That would defeat the fun of an action game, which is non-stop immersion in a real-time world. We looked at the radar from the original game and said, 'Let's make the radar almost a strategy game within an action game!' the interface kind of flowed from there."

Of, course, like any other real-time strategy product, the resource harvesting system is the heart of the game. Even here Battlezone strives to be different by closely intertwining the harvesting and resource system with the game's backstory. As they did with *Interstate '76* and *Mechwarrior*, Activision has a gift for making gamers care about the storyline in an action game. Again, drawing from the

Welcome to Europa! Don't drink the water.

well of inspiration first tapped in *Interstate '76*, *Battlezone* thrusts players into an alternative 1969, where history is slightly different from what we remember.

The space race was a lie...

In the world of *Battlezone*, Neil Armstrong's "One giant leap for mankind, "was actually a massive P.R. stunt designed to deflect the public's attention from space. The entire space race was a lie and, by 1969, the dark side of the moon was already a massive battlefield covered with the wreckage of U.S. and Soviet battle wagons. In 1949, the UFO crash at Roswell, New Mexico lets American and Soviet scientists become aware of an amazing alien metal known as "scrap,"

wreckage from an ancient war. The solar system is littered with this metal, and the space race was all about the Americans and Soviets trying to be the first to harvest it.

The alien metal has amazing memory properties; if you find a piece that used to be part of a tank, for example, you can actually re-form the scrap back into the original tank. Finding pure alien scrap can result in new unit types to construct (as the player moves through the game the units slowly become less human and more alien looking).

Don't get so caught up in the action you forget you radar!

Deploy your factory unit on steam vents to begin producing new units

Destroying an enemy craft can result in harvestable scrap that will allow you to reconstruct enemy units on your own side.

Another resource is pilots. Pilots within the game are not recyclable or generic units. Co-pilots will have statistics, and when their vehicle gets destroyed, you'll see them eject and attempt to run back to their own side. If a pilot gets killed, they can be replaced by a green recruit or, in a worst case scenerio, you may find yourself producing hardware without a pilot to fly it. This makes rescuing your own pilots a top priority, and running down and killing enemy pilots becomes both necessary and fun.

In a similar vein, should your own vehicle be destroyed, you'll find yourself running along the ground trying to score a new vehicle. Although you will have a laser to defend yourself, getting killed while out of your vehicle ends the game. "We want you to feel like you're a part of the game world," Arkin explains. "You are not a tank, you're a person. Losing your vehicle doesn't necessarily mean losing the game. We realized it could add to both the action and strategy portions of the game. Running around on foot while everyone else is in these quick hovertanks can be pretty hairy, but trading up to better vehicles on the fly is also a viable strategy in single or especially multi-player games. Plus running a friend down with the tank is so much fun!"

The game, will feature numerous multi-player options, including IPX support and TCP/IP, but the details are still being worked out. Activision, does have plans for a proprietary matchmaking service similar to Battle.Net.

The game's graphics are suitably impressive, although both Arkin and Goldman took `pains to de-emphasize the pretty pictures. "Systems have become so powerful nowadays, there's no excuse for not having spectacular graphics. They don't make the game any better, they're only one building block in creating a quality gaming experience," explains Arkin. Nonetheless, the graphics are top-notch, following the player across eight planets and moons of our solar systems. The texture maps have been created from actual NASA photos of planetary landscapes. Moon photos, of course have been available for years, but the Battlezone team actually spent days scanning the

Internet (especially NASA's own website) for photos from the Pathfinder probe on Mars.

More important (for the single player at least) is the game's AI. The AI for Battlezone was borrowed from Josh Resnick's Dark Reign. Arkin and Goldman paid homage to the current trend among AI designers to use "artificial life" type AI. "The game has no scripted AI routines," Goldman said. "In that way it's just like playing against a human being. The computer has a set of goals and, like a person, searches for ways to complete the goal. The missions are unscripted (except for a few pre-determined events) so that crossing over the same ridge in the same mission doesn't mean that the same enemies will always be there."

It remains to be seen whether the *Battlezone* team can pull this off, but there was at least one hopeful sign. During the Battlezone demonstration to CGE Mike paused to explain something after he had ejected from his tank. He was obviously not expecting the enemy to attack him, but the enemy, sensing a chance to strike, ran him down while he had his back to the machine, startling both designers. It's always a good sign when a game surprises the designers, especially during a PR presentation, which is always a highly scripted affair.

Of course, the success of the game will depend on play balancing and design decisions. The game still needs well designed missions, and no game should be judged based on an unfinished preview. But if the future potential of a game can be measured by the enthusiasm of it's designers, Battlezone is already a winner.

Real NASA Photos were used as texture for the various planets.

The Birth of Battlezone

"Supertanks compete in outer space!"
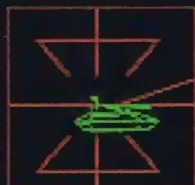
EVERY ART FORM has its firsts. The first design is often crude and laughable compared to its modern offshoots. Who, for example, would claim that the stop-motion special effects in the 1920's King Kong were better technically than the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park? What people often forget is that, without these stumbling first steps, the modern forms would not exist. Often lost in the glitz of modern productions, pioneering efforts get dismissed by those without the appreciation for the revolutions that they created in their day.

No modern history of video games can be complete without a discussion of Battlezone. Every first person perspective game, from Wolfenstein 3D to Doom to Duke Nuke'Em to Quake, is a descendent of this game. First released in October of 1980 by Atari, Battlezone was the brainchild of Morgan Hoff who eventually became the project leader, and Ed Rothberg, principal programmer. The story of Battlezone is one of cultish enthusiasm, programming wizardry and your typical game industry weirdness.

The idea for a tank simulator (working title - "Future Tank") was initially championed by Morgan Hoff of Atari Games. It was not an easy sell. There were conservative elements in Atari who were leery of anything that didn't smack of their most recent megahit, Pong. Objections to the game included the now standard "we don't have the technology to do this," or "It's too complicated", and the marketing

Above: "GAME OVER" can I borrow a quarter? Below: Often installed in Red Baron cabinets. It took several months to produce a Battlezone cabinet.

department's favorite refrain "It's never been done before!"

Although the project was eventually greenlighted, programming Battlezone wasn't easy. The marketing department was right about one thing, the technology didn't exist at the time to do everything they wanted to. Ed and Morgan used every high-tech programming trick and even a few low-tech ones to give the player a convincing 3D illusion. For example, the vector graphics used for Battlezone (although far superior to lo-res raster graphics of the time) could only be displayed in one color so a strip of red cellophane was taped across the top of the arcade screen to give a different color for the radar screen. One of the most memorable elements of the original game - the exploding volcano,

only made it in because a programmer who was working on a different project pestered Ed Rothberg about it so much that Ed challenged him to write it himself.

Army Battlezone

Battlezone was a hit right from the start. First the original Atari engineers and then the arcade playing public went crazy over the game. Indeed, the game's 3D world was so attractive and novel that many gamers refused to believe that there wasn't more of it than there was. Arcades were full of would be explorers who tried to leave the fighing behind and drive into the mountains. Aprocryphal stories floated around the early arcade community that there was a way to drive into the volcano and find a hidden castle. It was untrue, a missile would kill any players that strayed too far from the fighting, but the story

reveals the depth of player's fascination for *Battlezone*.

The sensation that *Battlezone* caused wasn't lost on the Armed Forces either. Thirteen years before the Marine Corps started training soldiers in infantry tactics with Doom, the U.S. Army commissioned Atari Games to create a specially modified version of *Battlezone*. *Army Battlezone*, though, remains one of the "urban legends" of the videogame industry.

Although it is a fact that some work was completed on the game, conflicting sources say that it either never went any further or that up to 5,000 units were produced.

The Army at the time was investigating whether or not arcade technology could be adapted as low-cost military trainers. Ed Rothberg was one of the programmers on the army version of *Battlezone*. The Army version of the game was actually far more detailed than the consumer version. According to information dug up by the Atari Gaming HQ website (**www. atari-hq.com**) only a few facts have come to light concerning the Army Battlezone.

- The player was in an Omar Fighting Vehicle that drove itself (you played the gunner).
- You were periodically presented with either friendly or enemy vehicles. (Tanks, helicopters, APC's)
- You had to deteremine whether the vehicle was friendly or hostile. (Killing a friendly meant Court Martial - I mean, Game Over)
- The viewfinder had normal and magnified views.
- The weapons included a machine gun and a cannon with two types of shells.

The game did not sit too well with a certain contingent of Atari personnel who had come to computer programming from the 60's counterculture. There were heated arguments within Atari between folks who felt that if it helped our soldiers in the field it was worth it, and those who hated "selling out" to "the man". Atari management, always passionate about secrecy, was fairly mum about the whole deal, possibly farming the final production of the game out to a subcontractor.

In the end, the whole deal seemed to drop off the face of the earth. At least one, possibly two, prototypes were produced, but their location remains mysterious. Atari itself, as well as the military establishment never released any information about the fate of the *Army Battlezone* and the whole episode entered the videogame X-Files along with the New Mexico landfill filled with ET cartridges and the secret dot in Adventure. Thanks to the Atari Gaming Headquarters website, though, you can at least see a rendition of the *Army Battlezone* game. Would it have had as much play value as the original? The world may never know!

A screenshot from the never seen Army Battlezone.

FOX INTERACTIVE:
UNRESTRICTED ACCESS

by Karen Jones

IT'S NO SURPRISE that the "big picture" at Fox Interactive, according to President Jon Richmond, has been to create top-notch entertainment titles inspired by hot properties of other Fox media. With full access to mega-hit TV and movie series like *The X-Files*, *The Simpsons*, *Predator* and *Alien*, why shouldn't they? Having hot properties and ideal demographics provides a nice leg up for Fox Interactive. "I think the Fox demographic is really keyed into this space," asserts Patrick Keane, a new media analyst at Jupiter Communications.He then adds, "Fox (television) has been widely cited as the most popular television channel for teens outside of MTV."

Fox Interactive's President John Richmond

Those properties and demographics, however, also mean that expectations are high — a major consideration for franchise titles. "The content has to come first," says Dave Shaw, executive director of World Wide Marketing at Fox Interactive. "We try to take the brand, say *X-Files* or *Simpsons*, and use that as a backdrop for the interactive experience. The nightmare comes if you don't accurately present an interactive experience based on that franchise — the experience *has* to ring true."

Big Screen Meets Computer Screen

It's fast becoming a cliche in interactive circles to harp about the ups and downs of franchise-based titles, especially since the learning curve for what constitutes great interactive entertainment has grown considerably for all. The bottom line, however, is that publishers have released successful franchise titles right along with downright embarrassments. Richmond feels that the failures were due initially to Hollywood treating the business as an ancillary revenue source and not concentrating on creating great interactive gameplay. He goes on to say that his company's mandate has always been the latter, citing titles like *Die Hard Trilogy* as proof of successful interactive adaptations. "The unsuccessful (Hollywood) approach has been, 'Let's take an A license and slap it on a C game,' and our approach has been if you take an A license and slap it on a C game, you've got a C game." He considers Fox Interactive a "creative production entity in itself — we set out to compete among the best competitors in the gaming industry. We don't believe our competition is Paramount, MGM or Disney. We look to the great gaming companies like EA and GT, and grade ourselves against them."

Fox has an impressive lineup for 1997/98, with *The X-Files: Unrestricted Access*, *The X-Files: The Game*, *The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield*, *Aliens vs Predator*, *Alien Resurrection: The Game*, *Anastasia* and, something brand new for them, an original character named "Croc" starring in his first platform/PC 3D adventure called *Croc: Legend of the Gobbos* (see sidebar).

One way Fox tries to ensure a faithful translation, along with the best possible interactive experience, is to involve as much of the linear (television, movie, etc) creative team as possible in the development process. Chris Carter of *The X-Files* and Matt Groening of *The Simpsons* were both present at the start of their CD-ROM projects and were major forces throughout. "We'd sit around and talk about story ideas, and try to incorporate what they want. It was a wonderful, very creative, environment," confides Paul Provenzano, executive director of product development.

When asked how comfortable they were working in multimedia, he offered, "There's a way to explain how you look and deal with interactive vs. linear. We had an original story for the *X-Files* game written by Chris — originally he came up with something that was 'if you go here that's fine; if you go here, you die.' You can't stage dramatic events (in interactive). You've got to create drama in everything you do." After explaining some of the basics, Carter and company caught on quickly and, according to Provenzano, provided a very compelling storyline which allowed for a lot of interactive leverage.
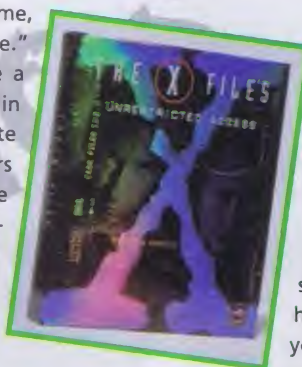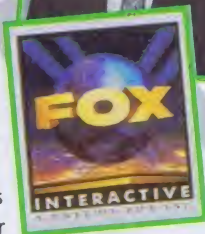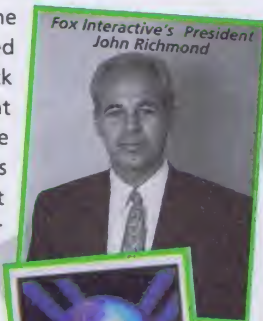
X-Philes Prepare

X-Files: The Game (still untitled at press time), releasing in Spring '98, promises to completely immerse players in the *X-Files* world. The player assumes the role of a young FBI agent working in a field office who's assigned to a case with agents Mulder and Scully, played by David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson. Following the industry trend of shying away from the term "FMV" ("full-motion video"), Fox is calling this a "live action-adventure" which required a 40-day shooting schedule in Seattle. Depending on how you wish to play, you can either work extensively with Mulder and Scully (who are not just talking heads offering hints) or investigate the case with minimal help from them. "What we didn't want to do was lose the dynamic of the show, which is how Mulder reacts to the world and how Scully reacts to the world. We did not want to put them off to the side," says Provenzano. Fans can also look forward to seeing Assistant FBI Director Skinner and many members of the cast.

In a very clever promotional tease, the case that *The X-Files* gamers will be working on is included in the current *The X-Files: Unrestricted Access* CD-ROM. *Access* is not a game, but an extensive interactive database which includes nearly every minute detail of all the *X-Files* cases so far and gives users the opportunity to re-investigate these files. Fox also offers *Access* owners updates and information on new television episodes through a special Internet browser.

Looney Tunes

The Simpsons debuted as a half-hour television series in 1990. Its infectious brand of humor and good-natured satire remains as popular as ever, which is terrific for Fox Interactive. Following the release of *The Simpsons Cartoon Studio* earlier this year, Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie Simpson, along with their pals are at it again in Fox's *The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield,* a 3D interactive entertainment. The entire city of Springfield and its surrounding areas have been recreated so users can freely explore the Simpsons' house, their local markets, arcades and more. Provenzano describes the title as an "everything *Simpsons*" and adds that "Matt Groening was very involved, down to the original lines of dialogue (the entire television cast participated). Everything that you see has roots in the Simpsons' world." He adds that there's a lot of material created specifically for the CD-ROM, including a new set of *Itchy and Scratchy* cartoons, a cheerfully violent sendup of "Tom and Jerry."

There is some question as to whether non-*Simpsons* and non-*X-Files* fans would be interested in titles like *Springfield* and *Access.* Shaw suggests that there's a huge market within the fan base but admits: "If you're not a *Simpsons* fan, you're not going to buy this title." He points out, though, that Fox "will go after [non-fans] as a gift-giving strategy — 'Know a *Simpsons* fan, give a gift to a *Simpsons* fan.'" He is also confident that the *X-Files* game will hold its own with the enthusiasts and gaming community."...[I]t's been designed to have great gameplay, adventure and suspense."

Also on the 'Toon front for Fox is the release of their "FoxToons" line of children's titles (ages 3-8) and a tie-in to Fox Studio's first full-length animated feature film *Anastasia.* One advantage to being down the hall from the linear development team is that full access to the goings-on can easily be made available. For the children's adventure title *Anastasia: Adventures With Pooka and Bartok,* that meant access to all the backgrounds, animations, palettes, 3D models — plus the cast who (including Meg Ryan) participated in recording the game's voiceover. Richmond wants to make it clear, however, that purchasers of the CD-ROM aren't just getting a rehash of the movie. "We don't like to re-tell something that you've experienced in a linear medium.... The interactive medium is the best for expanding on the underlying story being told." Players can assume the role of the dog Pooka and create their own story by helping the Princess Anastasia move from St. Petersburg to Paris in order to find her grandmother.

It is probably safe to say that if the movie *Anastasia* is a hit, all the subsequent merchandising tie-ins will do well. Dave Shaw knows that name recognition is a terrific head start as far as marketing titles are concerned, but that doesn't mean the advertising and promotional ball can be dropped. This is especially true since many in the industry are comparing all interactive sales, franchised-based or not, to the short

make-or-break performance of theatrical releases. "Clearly more and more of this business is becoming hits-driven, and those hits really occur in the first two months," says Shaw. "If you're not paying attention in the first two months, then you're out of the game." Asked if, in retrospect, there were any Fox titles which might have been marketed differently, both he and Provenzano mentioned *Independence Day*, the game based on last summer's box-office smash. Fox received some criticism that the distinction wasn't made clear enough that *ID4* was not a hardcore gamer's game, but a more mainstream, arcade-style shooter.

In the end, the success or failure of any title will be up to the players. It appears, however, that Fox Interactive has mustered the resources, commitment and gaming sense to go up against the heavy hitters in this business. "Fox has all the right elements — we have the powerful licenses, and not just *Heidi: The Game*," jokes Provenzano. He adds, "If you ask gameplayers if they think *Aliens* makes any sense to be in the game world, they'd answer: 'Are you crazy?'"

ALIEN RESURRECTION

Ridley Scott's 1979 classic science fiction film *Alien*, often described as *Jaws* in outer space, held audiences transfixed as an acid-bleeding space creature from Hell decimated the crew of the *Nostromo*, a freighter returning to Earth from deep space. The sole survivor was Lt. Ellen Ripley, played with incredible bravado by the then-newcomer Sigourney Weaver. As the big screen's only true action heroine, Ripley has returned to battle these ghastly fiends in two sequels — James Cameron's equally classic *Aliens* and

A CROC OF HIT

Croc: The Legend of Gobbos is Fox Interactive's first original interactive title. It stars a feisty little crocodile named (you guessed it) "Croc". "It's been two years in the making, and has a television deal in the works," says Fox Interactive president, Jon Richmond. With an eye toward introducing *Croc* to other media, Fox has been working hard on a back story and emphasizes the importance creating a whole world for him, complete with multidimensional supporting characters. However, Richmond states that the first goal was to create "dynamic gameplay." He believes *Croc* to be "the first free roaming CD-ROM platform game for the PC, which in a way brings the arcade to your PC for the first time."

There is no question that, as cute little crocodiles go, Croc certainly has the potential for merchandising tie-ins. He also appears to be a labor of love at Fox Interactive. "*Croc* is a chance to do a great many things that our business model in the past has prevented us from doing," says Dave Shaw, executive director of marketing, and adds, "Here we're starting a brand-new franchise. Here's a great character-based game in the tradition of *Mario* that will have wide appeal among gamers."

In this 3D adventure game, players will help Croc rescue his friends from the clutches of the evil magician Baron Dante. There are six different worlds, 50 enemies, 50 levels and 200 arenas chock-full of obstacles like lava flows and glaciers for players to waddle through.— **K.J.**

David Fincher's disappointing *Alien 3*. Now *Alien Resurrection*, the latest installment, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet (*City of Lost Children*), will have its own action/adventure game, releasing from Fox Interactive in Spring 1998.

Ripley is the key character in the game, according to Fox Interactive president Jon Richmond. He adds, "It's not a *Doom*-style shooter." This should set it apart from *Alien Trilogy*, Fox's 1996 release which was a standard, multi-weapon, multi-level, first person, action blastfest.

It's a little too early for Fox to comment on just what players can look forward to in *Alien Resurrection: The Game*, but the development team did have full access to the movie sets and the "dailies" (the movie footage shot that day). In addition, Fox had their pick of all weapons used in the movie and worked closely with the film's production designer who provided drawings of the bigger picture, like parts of the set that weren't built.

Proving that you can't keep a good Alien down, there's also *Aliens vs. Predator* releasing "sometime in '98," according to a spokesperson at Fox. Billed as a 3D combat action-adventure game, *Predator* presents players with the choice of playing either a space combat marine, an Alien or the Predator — a vicious adversary first seen giving Arnold Schwarzenegger a *really* bad day in 1987's motion picture *Predator*.

If online is your gaming arena, then *Aliens Online* should get your blood going. A collaboration between Fox and Kesmai, *AO* is a hardcore 3D action game allowing you to join either the colonial marines or the Alien nest. Each has it own combat skills and weapons — so prepare to log on for showtime in this multiplayer massacre. - **K.J.**

$220 $220 $240 $200 $260 $260 $150 $280

FREE PARKING   KENTUCKY AVENUE   CHANCE   INDIANA AVENUE   ILLINOIS AVENUE   B&O RAILROAD   ATLANTIC AVENUE   VENTNOR AVENUE   WATER WORKS   MARVIN GARDENS   GO TO JAIL
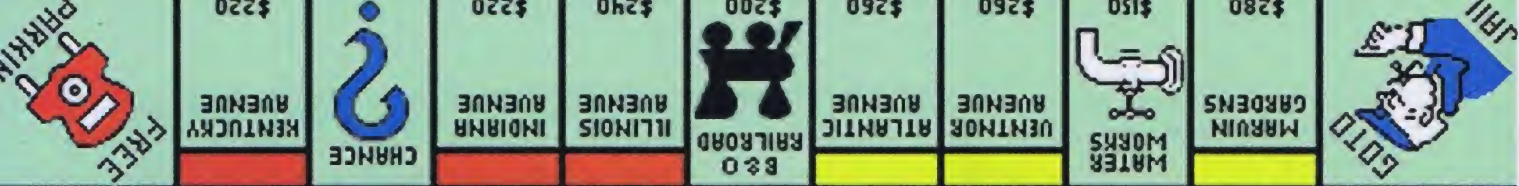
Board Games

Pass GO! Collect 200 Mhz

by Zach Meston

Let's be honest, folks: the most popular PC game in North America is not *Command & Conquer*, *Diablo*, or *Quake*.— it's that damn *Solitaire* application included with every copy of Windows 95. If I leave my PC unattended for more than two minutes, I know I will return to it and find my girlfriend happily clicking and dragging the three of hearts onto the four of spades. It is as predictable an event as the sunrise.

What does this phenomenon indicate to me? One, that I need to install a better lock on the door to my computer room. Two, that the old-school "traditional" entertainment options a gamer normally doesn't associate with PCs — card games, board games, "parlor" games — are just as entertaining, maybe even more so, on the computer than in the real world.

Solitaire, for example, is more enjoyable on a PC than it ever was in the coach seat of a 707 jetliner, where approximately 64.7% of all solitaire games are played; no mind-numbing shuffling, no piles of cards to spill, and no breaking the rules. (Well, OK, we like breaking the rules, but we don't like the other stuff.)

And what is the purpose of this article? To guide you in the direction of a cross-section of traditional games available on your PC, from timeless classics to future classics to board games you might not even have heard of before. If you've overlooked this genre in the past, it's time to take a second glance, because you're guaranteed to find something nifty.

Remember When? Hasbro's Classics

The undisputed leader in the category of PC-tized board games is Hasbro Interactive, the software division of the toy and game giant. Hasbro owns just about every board game manufacturer known to man, including Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley, so they have a roster of literally hundreds of games from which to choose. In the past year or so, they've done PC versions of

almost a dozen classic board games, including *Battleship*, *Clue*, *Monopoly*, *Risk*, *Scrabble* and *Yahtzee* — and if you actually need me to explain what any of these games are about, you must've come out of the womb a full-grown adult.

Not only do these computer versions retain all the fun of their analog counterparts, but they kick in those inevitable warm and fuzzy feelings of nostalgia. I mean, c'mon, who among us doesn't have fond memories of playing *Monopoly* in a treehouse on a hot summer

day, slipping $500 bills out of the banker's tray when your friends weren't looking?

Hasbro Interactive games also exemplify the advantages of playing traditional games on a computer. The computer handles all the rules; there are no pieces for small children and/or pets to gobble; and the programmers have added twists to the gameplay to keep the game fresh and to add extra value for computer users.

As Hasbro Interactive's VP of Marketing Gary Carlin points out, "The most important [factor] is how it's going to translate to the computer. It's something we take very seriously, because we recognize that these are important brands for the company. We take each case separately. What can the computer do [for the game]? *Monopoly* is a great example. We were

able to bring those properties and tokens to life. Players can see their favorite token gallop around the board. You can now play a series of computer opponents. You can play over the Internet. With *Risk*, we added AI, Internet play, fast setup, battle strategies." The best part: most of Hasbro Interactive's games retail at about thirty

bucks, not much more than the traditional board versions.

Shareware and Freeware

If paying for games offends you, you'll be pleased to know there's a whole world of shareware and freeware card and board games available on the Net, just a search engine away. For example, a simple Yahoo! search of the word "backgammon" turns up everything from a server dedicat-

ed to online backgammon games to a neural-net backgammon program (the shareware game *JellyFish*; free demo available at **http://www.effect.no/jelly.htm** to a multiplayer backgammon Java applet **(http://www.funcom.com)** to Microsoft's incredibly popular Internet Gaming Zone **(http://www.zone.com)**, which is where I do most of my backgammoning
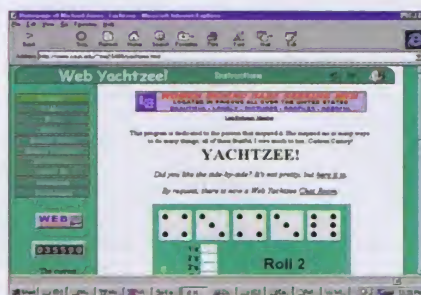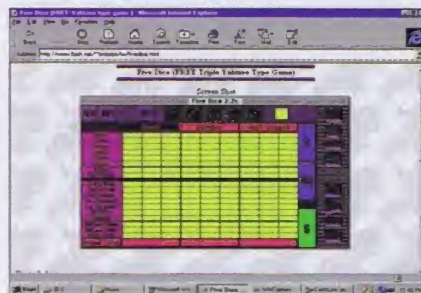
(yeah, it's a word).

You can also find free or nearly free ripoffs of — er, tributes to many traditional board games. *Yahtzee*, for example, has clones a mundo. A quick search uncovered a multiplayer online version, *Netzee* **(http://www.cs.cf.ac.uk/User/G.N.James/netzee)**; a Java applet, Web *Yachtzee* **(http://www.csun.edu/~mej16489/yachtzee.html)**; and a Macintosh freeware version, *Five Dice* **(http://www.flash.net/~timbobo/iw/fivedice.html)**. Of course, now that we've informed Hasbro of these clones, lawsuits are sure to follow. Sorry about that.

Practice Makes Perfect: Artificial Intelligence for those traditional games that require at least a moderate amount of thought and strategy, computerized versions are wonderful, as their simplistic

rules and goals allow programmers to create more-than-capable AI opponents. (Just ask Garry "Deep Blue Cheated! Da, It Cheated!" Kasparov.)

In the late-'70s era of the Atari VCS, there were cartridges that played adequate games of checkers and chess despite being limited to a hilariously low 2K of memory, smaller in size than most of the icons on your PC desktop. In other words, computerized board games aren't just substitutes for when your friends are out of town; they're sparring partners that sharpen your skills so you can crush those friends when they return.

The most recent example of the PC's potential for AI being applied to a "traditional" game is MicroProse's *Magic: The Gathering*, based on the stupefyingly popular card game from Wizards of the Coast. The daunting challenge faced by the designers (among them, Sid Meier, the legendary brain behind *Civilization*) was to translate the complex rules of Magic (which have undergone multiple revisions since debuting in 1993) and somehow produce a credible AI opponent. Amazingly, MicroProse pulled it off, discounting a few minor bugs. While the best human Magic players (who now compete on a million-dollar Magic "pro tour") would squash the computer like a grape, most newbies to the

Microsoft, a.k.a. the Borg of the computer world, but their Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com) has to be acknowledged as the best source of online traditional gaming. After a mere two-and-a-half megabyte download, you can log into the Zone and play eight classic games absolutely free: backgammon, bridge, checkers, chess, go, spades, and more. It's a must for anyone who enjoys any of these games, or who just wants to make new friends.

Traditional Games From the Fringe

The final stop on our magical mystery tour of traditional games leads us to the exotica, the stuff you probably haven't heard of but won't be able to put down once you play it. The best example: *mahjong*, one of the most popular traditional Asian games in existence, and best described as a more strategic form of *gin rummy*. (The classic computer game *Shanghai*, while it is played with mahjong tiles, has absolutely nothing else to do with the game of mahjong.) While mahjong games are incredibly common on Japanese computers and game consoles, they're almost nonexistent in the American market: the only commercial release of which I'm aware was *Hong Kong Mahjong Pro*, shipped by Electronic Arts back in 1992. I was immediately hooked, to the point where I went and bought a $100 mahjong tile set. (Unfortunately, I never found anyone willing to play with me. The curse of being antisocial.) The developers of EA's game, Nine Dragons Software, are now selling *Hong Kong Mahjong* over the Internet (http://www.ninedragons.com) as a shareware product, and it's as addictive as ever. Check it out and you, too, will know the difference between Pongs and Kongs.

game, like myself, will find it quite challenging. Plus, it's a teacher who doesn't charge by the hour, never gets cranky when asked to repeat something and will play me at three in the morning if I want. After a few days with *Magic: The Gathering*, I was ready to play the "real" game against real people.

The Human Factor: Playing Online

Many board and card games are as much about socializing as they are about winning and losing -- and that, until a few years ago, was the one truly legitimate complaint that could be leveled against their computerized versions. It's easy for four people to sit around a living-room table, and almost impossible for just two people to sit in front of a monitor. But now we have a little somethin' called the Internet, which has revolutionized multiplayer gaming and truly introduced a social aspect. Instead of playing with

friends who live at the end of the block, you can play with friends who live in other countries.

Playing traditional games on the Internet is great because the rules are simple enough, and the "action" is slow enough so that you can converse with others while you play, making friends while you have fun. It's very much unlike the "hurt, maim, kill" philosophy of most Internet games.

Just as it's a crime for PC games in other genres to be released without multiplayer support, so is it a crime for PC versions of traditional games not to support Internet play. Almost all of Hasbro Interactive's games, for example, have Internet support. (There was no multiplayer support in the initial release of *Magic: The Gathering*, a truly baffling omission that made the game's only real use as an AI practice partner; MicroProse has since introduced Internet play in an expansion CD.)

I almost hate to plug anything from

Go Forth and Be "Board" No More

And there you go. With these examples, you're well on your way to combining the appeal of traditional games with the technology of today's PCs. Just make sure you bring some friends along with you!

SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
by Scott Wolf

THERE'S NO DOUBT, about it, George Lucas is a copycat. Of course I mean that in a good way. He basically took cliches from every cheesy space opera and Saturday morning serial, mixed in a bunch of flashy World War II style air combat sequences, and recycled them into what's become the most popular and beloved conglomeration of multimedia applications in human history.

What makes the Star Wars universe, in all of its manifestations, stand head and shoulders above all challengers is its gritty lived-in detail, clearly recognizable themes, soul-stirring music and, most of all, its majestically grand scale. Everything is HUGE in the Star Wars world, from the dizzying depth of emotional entanglements to the awe-inspiring proportions of machinery and military hardware, not to mention the endless expanse of the physical landscape.

I'm told that LucasArts originally released *Shadows of the Empire* for the Nintendo 64 but since I despise the Ninten-

Stage Three of the Battle of Hoth throws AT-ATs into the mix of Imperial Probe Droids and AT-STs.

do corporation and everything that it stands for (I'm also told that I'm mistaken in my belief that the Japanese word "nintendo" means "arrogant bastards" in English) I wouldn't know and therefore cannot tell you how this new PC version compares to the console version. But fear not — if you're a true PC gamer you not only don't give a crap, you also have nothing to worry about. *Shadows of the Empire* is as fine a

way to spend your time and money as anything LucasArts has ever put out.

Shadows has been dismissed by some less enlightened critics as little more than *Rebel Assault III*, a not-altogether inaccurate description except that it doesn't take into account the great leap forward in graphics rendering, presentation and control that *Shadows* represents; advancements also present in LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* that make a choice between the two titles a tough one for gamers on a tight budget.

Both *Shadows* and *Jedi* take full advantage of DirectX 5.0 and the startling visual effects made possible by 3D accelerated video cards (most notably those using the 3Dfx chipset). The main difference between the two lies in the context and execution of gameplay — whereas *Jedi Knight* sends you, as rebel agent Kyle Katarn, on a personal journey of physical prowess and spiritual growth (will you follow the path of a true Jedi or be seduced by the dark side of the Force?) in a mostly first-person shooter (where you do finally get to wield a lightsabre), Shadows take a more cinematic approach, lavishing you with five different gameplay styles spread across ten multi-stage levels.

In order to complete your Escape From Echo Base you'll have to destroy this AT-ST level boss using only hand weapons.

91 Health

100 Laser

As maverick mercenary Dash Rendar, close personal friend of Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia Organa and fellow freebooter Han Solo, your mission is to foil the evil plans of Prince Xizor, Underlord of the Black Sun crime ring, who intends to assassinate young Mr. Skywalker.

Set in the fragile slice of time between The Empire Strikes Back and *Return of the Jedi*, *Shadows* drops you smack dab in the middle of a Star Wars movie of your own, whose plot is a non-stop rollercoaster ride toward a gloriously heroic attack run on the reactor core of Xizor's terrifying Skyhook space station.

Along the way you'll get to experience firsthand many of your favorite film moments, from flying between the legs of an Imperial AT-AT before taking it down with your Snowspeeder's harpoon cable, to tearing through the streets of Mos Eisley on a speeder bike, and somehow surviving the frenetic space combat leading up to the climactic reactor run on Skyhook.

Surprisingly, *Shadows* does a far better job at conveying the pure chaos of the Star Wars films' combat sequences than either *Rebel Asault*, *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter*. The purely cinematic approach allows for the suspension of logical disbelief in favor of a more visceral experience. Didn't you ever wonder how Han & Co. managed to stay in one piece while screaming through asteroids, TIE Fighters and immovable space station bulkheads? Well, now you get to find out!

Throughout *Shadows* you'll get to pilot a T-47 Snowspeeder, a Swoop Speederbike, a Rocketeer-style Jetpack, and a

Stop the Swoop Gang before they reach Luke out at Ben Kenob's place. For a really wild ride switch to a first-person POV!

chopped-and-channeled version of the Millenium Falcon called the Outrider, in addition to several sections you must navigate on foot. You can switch between first and third person perspectives as well as several dramatic fixed camera angles. While some are impractical for combat, they are essential for maneuvering through some of the more precarious precipices, where the spectacular 3D effects will start that strange little sector of your groin tingling at the convincingly real possibility of plunging several thousand meters to your death (if you have even a hint of acrophobia, take ample warning!). The game's Force Feedback (no pun intended) support literally pales in comparison to the total immersion achieved by *Shadows*' remarkable graphics.

If the Force is strong in you and you manage to finish the game having collected all available Challenge Points, a "game secret" becomes available to use next time

around (like being able to fly an X-Wing instead of the Outrider in the Skyhook battle). Each of the four difficulty levels has its own secret reward.

There's no denying that *Shadows* is a purely arcade experience, with its totally linear structure, Challenge Points, power-ups and irritatingly tiresome level "Bosses" (an archaic coin-op ploy to pry endless quarters out of you that has no place in home gaming), and a horribly frustrating save game system which only allows access to the beginning of each multi-stage level. There's also no multiplayer support but don't dismiss the timeless appeal of the single-player game too lightly — particularly when it's as lavish and lovely as this one (and there's always *Jedi Knight* for multi-play).

With it's comfortable cast of characters, variety of vehicles, wealth of weapons (sorry, no lightsabre), intoxicating graphics and rousing musical score (by Joel McNeely and John Williams, of course) *Shadows of the Empire* scores a direct hit on gaming mediocrity and puts action and enjoyment back at the forefront.

Whatever the hell that means. CGE

Graphic flourishes abound -- like this Imperial Shuttle unfolding its wings and blasting past your more modest transport.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Visually stunning, aurally impressive and totally immersive.*
MISSES: *Totally linear with some really tired arcade elements and an extremely poor save game system.*
THE LAST WORD:
Your dream of living a (single player) Star Wars adventure has come true.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	95
Playability	93
Originality	88
Graphics	94
Music and Sound	99
Gameplay	93

OVERALL 92

Tomb Raider II *by Allen Rausch*

I'VE JUST SPENT the weekend with a tremendously exciting woman. There was lots of jumping around, fireworks, explosions, sweating, grunting, and screaming. I traveled to many exotic locations and found myself in all kinds of bizarre positions. Unfortunately for my social life, the woman I was doing this with was Lara Croft, the star of Eidos' *Tomb Raider II*, and if other women were wondering where their boyfriends are this holiday season, they'd be well advised to check their PC's. They probably taking the same trip I did.

Lara and *TRII* won't take the world by surprise the same way the original did last year. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to point to a more anticipated sequel. What will take the world by surprise is the fact that Eidos Interactive and Core design took their responsibility to the Tomb Raider franchise seriously. *Tomb Raider II* is no quickie sequel designed to cash in on the success of the original. Eidos allowed the game's new creators to give us more of what made the original compelling with just enough new stuff to make the whole experience seem fresh and original again.

For the few people who have never heard of *Tomb Raider*, the game is a third

Lara — in a sporty new wetsuit — prepares to explore a sunken ship.

Ok — I'll admit it — she's a babe

person perspective action game, sort of a 3-D descendent of the side-scrolling platform game, most notably Jordan Mechner's classic Prince of Persia. In th game, Lara Croft, intrepid adventurer, treasure hunter, and yes — *tomb raider*-leaps chasms, hangs from ledges, swims rivers, dodges traps, and faces down human and animal enemies with a .45 in each hand, all to find fabulous lost archaeological treasures.

In this second installment Lara is chasing down the legendary Dagger of Xian. According to the stories, whoever plunges the dagger into their heart will acquire the power of the Dragon. Unfortunately, there are other parties interested in the Dagger, a Venetian organized crime mob who want the dagger for themselves, and the descendents of the Warrior Monks who don't want anyone to have it. Throughout her adventures, Lara will encounter both.

Running down *Tomb Raider II's* features one at a time, one must start with the obvious, the graphics. If there were

ever any doubts that 3D accelerator cards are here to stay, this game would dispel them. *TRII's* graphics are good enough in software mode, but once you add a 3D card they become simply breathtaking. Although, they never give the same vertigo inducing feeling that the mile-high towers do in *Jedi Knight*, they can be even more effective at inducing fear because they are simulating realistic locales. Very few people have ever fought a saber duel on a catwalk over a 10,000 foot drop but almost anyone can relate to the fear of falling that's generated when Lara is leaping among the rafters of an abandoned house.

TRII's locations are much more diverse and natural looking than the ones in the original. In order to recover the Dagger, Lara will have to traverse a section of the Great Wall of China, the canals of Venice, a sunken ship and a Tibetan monastery along with a few other surprises. What makes the level design so terrific is that the levels look more natural and realistic than the first game. Platforms and levers don't leap out at you in anomalous locations
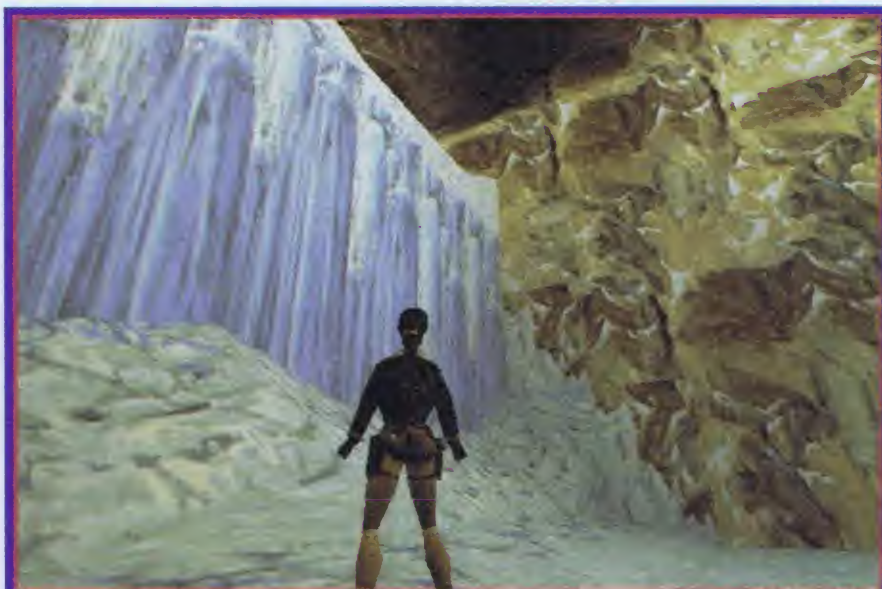
TRII's settings are far more natural and realistic

that ruin the illusion.

For example, the abandoned house in the Venetian section of the game is chock full of puzzles that require you to leap around and pull levers. More importantly, though, the virtual space works as an abandoned house! The different platforms were such a natural part of the environment that it took me considerable time to figure out that they were more than wallpaper. That contributes to a marvelous sense of discovery when you realize "Hey, those chandeliers aren't just for show! I can jump on those things!" Of course, jumping onto the light fixtures then opens up a whole new area to explore, which is what keeps you coming back for more.

The camera angles are better in this edition as well. One problem with the previous game was that the game would often select a camera angle that made it difficult to see well enough to fight effectively. TRII's levels and camera angles are constructed not only for fighting, but also so that they generate the maximum visual drama. When Lara grabs onto a rope slide the angle cuts to a low angle from the valley floor that gives Lara's flight maximum impact. In Venice, the only way to get through one area is to drive a speedboat up a wooden ramp, through two plate glass windows and then out onto the water. The first time I did this and watched the camera angle switch to watch the boat come crashing through the glass I realized that the designers stylistic sense was at least the equivalent of any Jackie Chan

movie (and I mean that in the best possible way).

Lara, too, has been upgraded. Much has been made in the mainstream press of Lara's appearance, her clothing, her weaponry, and her somewhat unrealistic chest region. However, what was forgotten in the entire tizzy surrounding her appearance, was the reason that her appearance generates such interest. Put simply, Lara Croft, is the first genuinely great character to come out of the gaming realm since the creation of Mario. She's got personality by the bucket load and a style that rivals other great animated characters. It doubtful that she'll ever knock Mickey Mouse or Bugs Bunny out of their places in America's heart, but I'd wager she'll be around longer than Anastasia.

In her new incarnation, Lara's been given a number of new moves, she can now shimmy to the side when hanging from walls of ledges, and a number of new dodges and jumps. She also has a beautiful gymnastics style dismount after climbing up a wall that has no purpose other than to show the incredible beauty and grace of the character's animation. This Lara, with her sporty new ponytail, is made up of more polygons and manages too look far more like a human being than the first game, all without losing any grace or fluidity of motion. She also has a number of new weapons and the ability to use vehicles, including a speedboat and a snowmobile.

If the game fails in any one area it

would be in sound and music. Lara's voice-overs were very well done and what music and sound effects there were great. Unfortunately, they're really rather sparse. None of the enemies ever seem to say anything except in cut-scenes and Lara herself is pretty silent as well, usually restricting her comments to grunts of effort, saying "No" when you don't have the key to a door, and screaming when falling off a cliff. I would have liked to see more commentary from Lara about what she was seeing and perhaps a few other voices. I played this game for about 36 hours straight (yes, it's that good), and after I was done I realized that I had almost forgotten what the sound of human speech was like. I hate comparing this game to *Jedi Knight*, since they're very different, but after a while I got to miss the Stormtroopers yelling, "Hey, you're not authorized!"

\In addition, the system requirements are rather high. I ran the game on an Intergraph TD-225 Pentium II running at 266 MHz with an Intense 3D Voodoo card. At that level of processing power, the game ran smooth as glass and was stunning. Gamers with less powerful systems or without 3D cards will have to run the game in the software only lo-res mode. The game still runs pretty smooth, but has noticeably less visual impact.

Still, that's nitpicking for a game that's destined to be one of the leading contenders for Game of the Year. *Tomb Raider II* is everything that Eidos promised it would be and more. In the end I can give the game no higher praise than to say that this game is so good I would actually have spent my own money on it and been happy. Regardless of the genre you enjoy playing, or if you're looking for a gift for a friend, it's virtually impossible to go wrong buying *Tomb Raider II*.

OVERVIEW

HITS: Lara Croft, level design, controls

MISSES: High system requirements. After a weekend with Lara I've forgotten how to relate to real people.

THE LAST WORD: *Lara Croft is such an amazing character people forget how good the game was. Tomb Raider II will remind them.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	100
Playability	94
Originality	95
Graphics	98
Music & Sound	91
Gameplay	99

OVERALL 96

action

REVIEW

Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **ID Software**
Telephone: **800--474-3650**
Website: **www.idsoftware.com**

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
• Pentium 90 running on Windows 95
• 16MB RAM
• 4x CD-ROM
• SVGA, 256 Colors
• Sound Blaster compatible sound card

Quake 2 *by Cezanne Huq*

THE UBIQUITOUS release of *Quake* spawned a conglomerate of clones, borrowing from the notorious *Quake* engine in hopes of delivering something fresh and new. This emergence of a new era in the first-person genre fortified its popularity. Meanwhile back at home *Quake* managed to keep the gaming world's attention despite all the anticipated *Quake* killers. Now, ID Software unleashes what is arguably the next generation in first-person shooters. Fully loaded with a fresh new story line, packed with panache and overflowing with eye-popping graphics *Quake 2* jacks into bowels of our imagination. The ever-growing struggle to reinvent the first person genre continues and ID Software once again injects new life and energy with *Q2*.

Q2 comes complete with a new story line and mission based gameplay. Although the *Q2* concept and story is contrived and is certainly more commercial than its predecessor, it still is a refreshing change. In *Doom* and *Quake* all you really knew was that you were a marine immersed into combat firing your way through enemy lines. Out flank your enemies, find a few secrets and finish off the level all in record time. In *Q2* you are a marine delivered in a coffin like pod to the planet Stroggos, but this time you are not alone. Fellow marines have been littered all over Stroggos in an effort to eradicate all of the inhabitants.

Quake was somewhat maligned for being "brown". It had a consistent drab, dark feel to it; some players noticed it and wondered why there couldn't be more of a variety. *Quake II* addresses this issue.

Quake II is not bright and airy and pastel like *Hexen II*—you're fighting in a world inhabited by semi-human robots that do not care about art, the walls, fixtures, lights, signs, and textures, are impressive and offer more variety.

The new level design is awesome.

Q2 supports all flavors of OpenGL with no support for DirectX 3D at all. While SVGA support is there it does not show off the intricacies in lighting and effects that the ID team laboriously added for OpenGL compliant accelerator cards. Gunshots fired, trails blaze and ricochet off walls until dissipating into a wondrous spark. Textures paint the hideous barrage of Barracuda Sharks as you swim through the streams of Stroggos. Tripping over rotted flesh reveals the gaping wounds inflicted by your gunshots. Smooth frame rates allow for bellowing lava pits and oscillating traps.

Q2 doesn't exactly introduce anything new in terms of gameplay. But a few new moves like crouching and crawling adds to *Q2s* mayhem. You start the level, making your way through collecting power-ups and weapons, avoiding and destroying half humanoid Shotgun guards, (if you have time between shotgun blasts and blood-curdling screams), search for secrets, and enter either a darkened room

or a slipgate to end the level. *Q2* also offers an inventory allowing for strategic usage of power-ups. This is a vast improvement in the single player mode. Press the Tab key to access the inventory and use the bracket ([ ]) keys to move through the list. Status information will update to show an image of the currently selected item. Press the Enter key to use a high-lighted item or press the single quote key (') to drop an item.

A field computer you moves on to your next objective seamlessly, busting through the congregation of half-alive enemies. Divided into a series of complex missions or objectives, the field computer is crucial to the success of your mission, and requires constant monitoring. The field computer details your unit location, your primary objective, secondary or current objective, kill ratio, goals completed and number of secrets found. When your field computer receives an update an icon will appear at the bottom of the screen.

Another great feature is the ability to

heh heh...Zog duck mosquito

live for a few more seconds.

An amazing array of new weapons performs differently with different enemies. The arsenal includes a blaster, shotgun, super shotgun, machine gun, hand grenade, chain gun, grenade launcher, rocket launcher, hyper blaster, rail gun and BFG. Omission of the meek nail gun and super nail gun was a smart move on IDs part. The Intel Brief section of the manual describes general information on your weapons and alien profiles so know your enemies and use the appropriate arsenal for an effective attack.

The AI is certainly a step above *Quake* and makes the baddies tougher to whack. Enemy animation is great, especially when enemies get shot. Sheer horror will engulf you as you attempt to blow the head off of a Machine-gun Guard while he sprays a few more rounds into the air. The wounds each shot inflicts on an enemy is apparent right on their bodies. A few more rounds and all that's left is pieces of his flesh festering in a whirlpool of blood. Try to accept death as a Light Guard dodges shotgun fire while you attempt to plow through the outer base to get to the installation. Flies gather for

a feast as bodies lay lifeless, remnants of your mayhem.

Another fun twist is that you can actually perform body and hand gestures with your character during multi-player games. Hit the "U" key and your *Quake II* alterego will point; hit "H" and you'll "flip off" your opponent; hit "J" and you'll do a salute; hit "L" and you'll wave to your opponent; and hit "K" and you'll taunt your opponent.

In addition to the plethora of new monsters there are not documented that are lurking about here and there. Watch out for them. The actual ID software windows based level editor is included and the game supports up to 200 Players via TCP/IP over the Internet.

Q2's theme song is composed and performed by Rob Zombie. Level music was designed and treated by Sonic Mayhem formerly known as M.O.D. "methods of destruction." Aggressive beats and heavy sounds combined with a touch of chaos add ambience and dynamic to *Q2s* world. *Q2* backbeats include jungle and break beats along with heavy guitar riffs. Level music from a thematic perspective certainly immerses the player and provides an excellent gaming experience. Obviously *Quake* was one of the greatest video games ever to make it to the PC and it is a hard act to follow. But *Quake II* is the genre buster that is going to set a new standard in first-person shooters. ID is depending on it and it will quite easily put them on the top of the first-person action genre once again. When the dust settles, humble yourself in the shadow of *Quake 2*. Watch the world grind to a halt. Sleep is out the window...*Quake II* ROCKS.

hand off inventory items to fellow marines. Help a fallen marine by giving him one your power-ups or swap ammo with a marine in multi-player mode as you blast your way through enemies. Give an item to another player simply by selecting it from your inventory and press the ' key. The item will then be tossed out for anyone to pick up.

Quake 2 was never billed as a role-playing game. Good thing. However, what goes on between that initial entrance and that final exit is, for the lack of a better word, freakin' awesome. *Q2s* immerse gameplay is fast and furious while the sights are almost breathtaking. You'll journey from Alien-like space-stationesque levels to castles and keeps, blasting body parts away and hoping to

Let me introduce you to my little friend!

OVERVIEW

HITS: Scenario enhancements, new story line, new weapons and a fresh soundtrack make *Quake II* an excellent game.

MISSES: *While it does sport new features and additions Quake II is not much different than Doom and Quake in gameplay.*

THE LAST WORD: *Improved AI and superior design makes Quake II a landmark in gaming—should be on every gamer's shelves.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	90
Playability	85
Originality	85
Graphics	90
Sound & Music	90
Gameplay	85

OVERALL 89

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II *by Shane Mooney*

LUCASARTS, HAS NEVER been a pioneer. Their specialty is to take what is already there, and make it better. LucasArts didn't invent the adventure game, but with titles like *Monkey Island* and *Full Throttle*, they set the standard. The same can be said of their latest game *Jedi Knight*. While LucasArts didn't invent Quake, or even the first-person shooter, with *Jedi Knight* they shake Quake to its foundation and seek to spell *Doom* for any who dare attempt to enter into this crowded field.

This sequel to *Dark Forces* (itself a better *Doom* than *Doom*), has everything that made the original so popular, as well as everything the critics said it lacked. Once again you are cast in the role of Kyle Katarn, but this time, you've abandoned your mercenary ways to become a Jedi. You find yourself facing the diabolical forces of Jerec—the most powerful of the Dark Jedi—and your father's murderer. Jerec tries to unlock the Force energy of thousands of past Jedi Knights hidden away in a secret Jedi burial ground. While you attempt to avenge your father's death, you must also protect his dark secret. But in so doing, you'll confront a moral dilemma of the greatest dimension—you'll have to decide whether to

Do or do not – there is no try...

fight the seemingly insurmountable forces of evil, battling for the Light side of the Force, or whether to avail yourself of the enormous power of a member of the Dark side. Each choice brings with it tremendous powers as well as terrible consequences.

Jedi Knight is 21 levels of the Star Wars universe, all in true 3D. Unlike the previous Dark Forces, you'll find that each mission is related to the one before. While the first task is going after a robotic double-crosser who's stolen your father's data disk, the second has you recovering the double-crosser's severed limb (which you so brutally blasted off) it's hand still clutching the disk. While you engage in each mission, you'll find plenty of bad guys ranging from stormtroopers to AT-STs, all rendered in gorgeous 3D.

But this is more than a *Quake*-clone. It has plenty of *Star Wars* elements to make it truly wonderful. Along with a trusty blaster, now you finally get to wield the power of a light saber(and you'll find that the more you use it, the better you become). You'll also find that along with the tried and true armament, you'll gather unique powers of the side of the Force you choose, as the game progresses. The Dark side has the Choke Hold made famous by Darth Vader and the Light side is

capable of a bit of mind control.

Combine all these features and you've got more than a first-rate, first-person slayathon—you've got an action game that also has the best elements of an RPG.

There are only a few downsides to the game, one being that the cold, gray walls of the Star Wars space stations can get pretty boring at times, but hey, at least they're accurate, and the system requirements for this thing are pretty hefty. We tried to run it on a Pentium 120 with 32 MB RAM and a 3Dfx card, and still had an almost intolerable amount of jerkiness whenever you turned a corner.

Still this is easily the best 3D game so far, and until *Quake 2* or *Unreal* comes out, may very well be the 3D game of the year.

OVERVIEW

HITS: The *Star Wars* universe finally brought to true interactive life.

MISSES: Hefty system requirements may put this game out of reach for many gamers.

THE LAST WORD: The best first-person action game that we've seen so far.

Ratings	
Playability	97
Originality	89
Graphics	90
Music & Sound	97
Dollar Value	97
Gameplay	97

OVERALL 95

REVIEW

Need For Speed II: SE *by Peter Suciu*

GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING, head out on the highway... yeah, yeah you know the rest. Anyway, Electronic Arts is stretching as much life out of the *Need For Speed* brand name as possible because the sequel to the popular original game has spawned it's own mini-sequel in the form of the dubious "Special Edition." Where the original *NFS*, with the ever pretentious Road & Track moniker, was a classic, putting players in the driver's seats of some nice rides, the sequel just didn't live up expectations.

The real problem lay in that fans of *Need For Speed* felt at home and comfortable in Ferraris, Porches, Corvettes, Vipers and other dream car names. Even if a gamer couldn't afford the cars, they knew them well enough. They had more style than the near concept cars of *NFS II*. No offense to Lotus, Isdera or McLaren, but it's just not a Porsche 911. Still the *NFS* Special Edition does have a nice selection of Ferraris and some interesting Fords. Maybe even deeper is the fact that *NFS* felt like good old Road & Track. Everything just had a made in the USA feel to it, while the sequel and the Special Edition are just too

Just another drive in through the country side (of a jungle island)

European. The catchy trance dance score, the digital is like good old style displays and the tracks are more likely to evoke images of a Parisian dance club than the coastal roads of California. And many virtual race drivers no doubt had visions of guys like Kurt, Chad and Ronald in *NFS* driving those Corvettes and Vipers. *Need For Speed II* instills visions of guys named Hans, Henri and Claude. Thank you, but no thank you.

The Special Edition has increased the overall number of cars a player can choose from and added a new set of track south of the border in Mexico. Finally, the designers added a rain option and also allows

players to reverse the course of all the tracks (for those out there that liked driving the opposite way). These features are cool bells and whistles and maybe just enough to give the game another look for those who passed on it the first time around. But for open road racing, nothing beats the original *NFS*. They should know better than to mess with a classic. **CGE**

Proving Grounds
The thrill of victory!

OVERVIEW

HITS: *You can drive a $100,000 car really fast and not have to pay for the insurance. You can even drive it in the rain!*

MISSES: *Stop that damn music and give me back the Porsche!*

THE LAST WORD:
Does the world really need another Special Edition?

Ratings	
Dollar Value	89
Playability	85
Originality	80
Graphics	85
Sound & Music	80
Game Play	80

OVERALL 83

Defiance *by Klaus Trafford*

FOR SEVERAL YEARS AVALON HILL, has attempted to transform itself from traditional boardgaming company into a genuine player in the computer gaming field. The company has made several attempts to breach the market, for the most part relying upon translations of their excellent but aging boardgames designs. The strategy hasn't been a complete failure, the company has a few solid, if underwhelming computer games under it's belt. However, all that may change with the release of *Defiance*.

Like its name suggests, *Defiance* represents a new outlook for Avalon Hill. Make no mistake, *Defiance* isn't a totally outstanding game, but it is a good solid game, and an excellent attempt at a genre they are quite unfamiliar with. Marketed under their all new Visceral Productions spin-off label, probably to dodge criticism from die-hard grognards, *Defiance* can best be termed as a cross between *Quake* and *Descent*.

Defiance's story is set on a remote world deep inside a Terran military research facility. The Earth Army has greenlighted an experimental project in hopes of prviding relief for their badly outgunned armed forces. The player is a soldier assigned to oversee testing of the new LAV-6 , a Low-Altitude Assault Vehicle, The LAV-6 is a one man, mini-gunship. During the rollout phase however, the facility is attacked by enemy forces and quickly overrun.

The enemy is a race of cyberorganic creatures bent on conquering and enslaving humanity (aren't they always?) These creatures are synthetically bio-engineered killing machines. Alone, outnumbered and obviously outgunned, the player must somehow rescue a handful of scientists and regain control of the base from the aliens.

Gameplay is reminiscent of *Descent*; players fly their tiny ship through a variety of narrow corridors, cathedral-sized sectors and huge indoor and outdoor realms. Players must also deal with alll manner of terrain, obstacles and other objects, such as crates, rocky surfaces and domed enclosures. Crates, for instance, can, and sometimes must be blown up by the player, in order to reveal hidden objects or other essential material. The player is also assisted by the radio transmissions of a scientist hidden somewhere within the facility. The radio transmissions, which periodically interrupt play, are intended to flesh out the evolving story and, outline each level's goal. The voice

Defiance — fun, but dark.

overs, by the way, are quite well done and help provide a coherent rationale for moving from place to place.

Although the action is fast and furious, sometimes occurring at breakneck speed, players won't encounter the same disorienting and dizzying effects playing *Descent* sometimes triggers.The LAV-6, is a hovercraft and is incapable of executing loops or other exotic maneuvers. This is both a good and bad thing, It's good in that the game's large if somewhat simple levels don't get as confusing as Descent. It's bad in that it removes what might have been a point of differentiation between this game and every other first person-perspective shooter on the market.

In fact, piloting the ship may prove exasperating for some since the craft requires lift, generated by on-board booster engines to ascend elevated areas and retrieve especially important items. The player must be careful, when engaging the, since lift is rapidly, although never permanently, exhausted. The craft is far less responsive during these down periods and since these arbitrarily limited jumps are absoultly vital in destroying certain enemies, players will have to make up their own mind whether they think the boosters add anything to the game.

Perhaps the game's biggest drawback is that the designers seem to have gone to the *Quake* school of color selection. The weaponry effects are suitably spectacular, often creating bright day-glo color trails, however, those are really the only bright colors in the game. Everything else is painted in a dark and dingy brown-black-brown color scheme, including the aliens. Unfortunately, the dark colors serve to make the levels seem claustrophobic and confining. Although the levels and puzzles are quite large and interesting, the game's earth tone color scheme don't show it off to it's best advantage

In the end, Defiance is a noteworthy product. *Defiance* represents a triumph for AH in that it's first break-into-the-genre product is quite good out of the gate. Many other companies venturing into unknown territory botch their first attempt, but AH has in *Defiance* a good base from which to build. It will be interesting to see what they produce in the future. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Fast and furious action. Interesting enemies.*

MISSES: *Bland colors. Jump jets badly underutilized.*

THE LAST WORD If your into single-player, give it a shot.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	83
Playability	87
Originality	83
Graphics	85
Music & Sound	85
Gameplay	84

OVERALL 85

REVIEW

adventure

Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny

by Andy Backer

ALTHOUGH LANDS OF LORE: *Guardians of Destiny*, Westwood's newest role-playing action adventure game, features four CDs filled with breathtaking graphics and more than 120 hours of gameplay, it may be more frustrating than fun for the average gamer.

The player's alter ego is Luther, a witty young man with a strange curse. He involuntarily and randomly morphs, alternately into a small lizard or a huge ogre. His search for a cure takes him through jungles, caves and ruins as well as over mountains. Luther is the son of the Witch Scotia, finder of the Nether Mask. She was killed before she could harness its power, however, and her attempt to pass the Mask to her son as she died, was unsuccessful. As a result, Luther is cursed by the Mask's shape-shifting properties. Luther is also being hunted down by Belial, who wants to kill him for the Mask, and by the Draracle's agents, who are playing a mysterious game.

Luther fights back with medieval weapons and armor. He also uses magic powers and spells. All in all, he does battle with ferocious surrealistic creatures while solving a wide range of puzzles. The puzzles are fun and easy at first, but become complex and frustrating as the game develops. The game is a joy to explore, highly original, and full of delightful surprises.

Unfortunately, until Luther gains control of his curse, the player spends too much time waiting to morph. For example, a part of a cave is only accessible to Luther in his lizard form, but Luther is human. After five to ten minutes, Luther may change into an ogre. In another five, he may just change back to human. It can take hours for Luther to turn into a lizard.

The designers have also included a number of frustrating arcade style jumps for Luther to make (save, jump, restore, jump, restore, jump...ad infinitum). The

The game has some incredible scenes, but lacks the script lacks depth in certain area's.

jumping should have been eliminated or at least made "intelligent" as Origin finally did in Ultima VIII. Jumping and waiting to morph aren't the game's only time-wasters. There are also large, time-consuming mazes to meander through. Without all the mazes, jumping and waiting, the game could have been cut down from 120 hours to 60.

The interface is loaded with options. Players can customize their movement, inventory and fighting controls, set an auto-save timer, write and attach notes to an auto-map, as well as set the level of difficulty. A player can choose paths which may, for example, lead to the Huline Jungle, or to Draracle's secret museum to pick up some magical weapons first. Other paths remain undiscovered. Players may also choose to be naughty or nice—or a combination of the two. Their choice is played out as they kill or befriend those they meet on their journey.

Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny is generally a satisfactory action-adventure with multiple paths. It does have role-playing elements but probably won't appeal to hard-core role-playing gamers who like to create their own characters and prefer turn-based combat. The game's option-filled interface is challenging but manage-

able. Some graphics are pixilated, but the majority are exquisite. The sounds and music are superb. The script is occasionally weak and some of the actors inadequate. On the other hand, many of the actors are brilliant, especially the actor playing Luther. He has a wry, sometimes brilliant wit. Guardians may have too many flaws to be the best role-playing game of the year, but it's right up at the head of the pack.

Westwood Studios released a 3Dfx enhancement for *Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny* on its Web site in mid-November. The patch allows the game to run at 640x480 resolution with optimized lighting, improved graphics, and increased frame rates. **CGE**

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Breathtaking first person 3D graphics and an enchanting, original story.*

MISSES: *Complex mazes, impossible jumps and long waits to morph.*

LAST WORD: *Flawed and frustrating but brilliant.*

Ratings

Dollar Value:	94
Playability:	88
Originality:	89
Graphics:	90
Music and Sound:	90
Gameplay:	89

OVERALL 89

Riven *by Andy Backer*

Riven is a visionary, exquisitely produced masterpiece of science fiction, a more than worthy successor to the Miller brothers' phenomenal best seller *Myst*. Players who like *Myst*—and 3.5 million unit sales indicate many do—will love *Riven*.

It includes many of the features that made Myst so popular. It is a fictional, yet fully realized world illustrated with knock-em-dead, photo-realistic graphics; wonderful contraptions with all sorts of gears, pulleys, levers and buttons that hiss, creak and groan; as well as dozens of stimulating puzzles to solve. *Riven* also has more story, puzzles, art, animations, sounds, music, and people. It is so much bigger, better and faster than Myst that it takes five CD-ROM disks to encompass it all!

Riven's attention to detail—from the smallest stone—to a character's costume, gives players an experience so immersive, they feel as though they are visiting a real world. Players also will find the puzzles in Riven more seamlessly integrated into the expanded storyline than in Myst.

The story picks up almost exactly where Myst ended, but after that, it's all new puzzles, characters, and environments. The player has been chosen by Atrus to journey to Riven to find and rescue his wife, Catherine, whom he fears has been

Seal-like creatures sun themselves on the rocks.

imprisoned by his powerful and corrupt father, Ghen. This separation of wife from husband and father from son illustrates the game's title, which means, "a splitting or coming apart."

While *Myst* players will see a logical progression from the end of *Myst* to the beginning of Riven, it is not necessary to have played *Myst* beforehand. It is a complete story in itself with a distinctive beginning and ending.

Riven was inspired by the subconscious, according to its creators. One such subconscious stimuli may have been the Wizard of Oz. The central character of both stories is whisked off to a fantasy world filled with contraptions and ruled by a self-proclaimed all-powerful God. The Wizard is really just an ordinary man hiding behind a curtain, who speaks to his visitors through a microphone while he manipulates special effects in a throne room. This is paralleled In *Riven* by a private "imaging room" above The Temple. Ghen broadcasts his image from there to a worshiping congregation in The Temple.

Myst was criticized for being a dead world. Players explored a world of objects, devoid of living life forms. (Many publishers, however, thought that was made the game a best seller and released a host of unsuccessful, but equally dead world *Myst* clones.) *Riven*, on the other hand, fully animates its world's life forms. Players may stroll down jungle paths filled with birds, bugs and scarab beetles. They'll see and hear seal-like creatures sunning themselves on a large rock in a bay, or mothers gathering their children and hiding behind locked doors in a village.

Another *Myst* criticism was that players' movements weren't fluid. Walking through its world was like viewing a slide show. Players see a slide, take a step and see another with out any transition. Fluid movement incorporate transitions. Aggravating the issue was Myst's game speed. The slide show was just too slow!

Unfortunately, movement in *Riven* is also a step-by-step slideshow. However, it feels more fluid. The slides pop up much, much faster than in *Myst*. *Riven* also has many more seamlessly integrated, fully animated cut scenes, which add to the illusion

Getting Started

A view of The Great Golden Dome and the entrance to its Gate Room from the bridge.

Riven is a large, fully detailed adventure game with demanding puzzles that will take veteran gamers weeks to solve. The truly dedicated will take notes about all they see and hear (especially of sounds that are specifically associated with symbols) draw maps of all locations and even keep a journal about the clues they discover. Above all, they'll save—often.

Veteran gamers are warned not to read the following walkthrough. It gives away too many surprises. Impatient novices, on the other hand, may appreciate the help.

A Warning

There are several things a player should avoid doing in Riven. Most of them occur near the end of the game, but there is one that may pop up in the early going. Players should not operate The Telescope (the ice-cream-cone shaped thingamajig near where the player enters Riven) until after they've rescued Catherine. It isn't even an option until players turns on the steam power that makes it operable, but the following paragraphs will show them how to do that.

Temple Island

Players begin the game behind a barred gate which eventually opens. Up ahead is the inoperable Telescope and gate lever. To the right is a stairway to a bridge that takes players across a chasm to The Temple. If players turn to the left before crossing the bridge, however, they face an open door into the Gate Room.

The Gate Room

To the right of the open door is a button that revolves a series of gates in a circle, most of which block open doors. Players should push the button four times (wait for the mechanism to stop turning each after each push) turn around and go left along the path, down the steps, to a dead end. Players should then turn left twice to face and then go under a locked gate. The path leads up a ladder, across a board and into the Gate Room. Players may then go through the Gate Room

into a cave, flip the steam-valve lever (to power The Telescope), turn around and go back to the Gate Room. Just before entering they should pull the handle on the left side of the open door and then push the rotation button twice. Players may then go through the Gate Room into an antechamber, turn around and push the handle on the left and the button to the right of the open door twice before reentering. Players should exit through the main entrance, turn around and rotate the chamber twice more. Players may now enter the Gate Room and cross the bridge to The Great Golden Dome.

The Great Golden Dome

Players should enter the chamber and follow the catwalk left, down a flight of stairs, halfway around the chamber, and then outside onto a short catwalk left of the main walkway to throw the lever on a steam valve. Players may then return to the main walkway, follow it to the left through a rock tunnel, and throw a third steam valve lever.

All players have to do then is return to the Gate Room, cross the bridge and enter the passageway that leads to the Temple.

The Temple

Through the first door to the left is The Temple Imaging Room. If players sit on the throne they'll see imaging devices on both sides of the door. They should throw the lever of the left device to open the door to a room filled with pillars out the door, to the left , down the stairs and through the stone door. From there players may go through the open door to the tramline.

Jungle Island

To call a tramcar to the station, players must press the blue sphere next to the steps. To operate the tramcar, they must click-drag its rotation knob to the left, and then push its power lever forward.

of movement. Players move step-by-step (slide by slide) to an open door, for example. There is a button on the wall next to it. When players push the button, a locked gate fluidly revolves to block the open door. If players push the button again, another gate takes its place—if they keep pushing, the doorway eventually opens.

Although *Riven* is a masterpiece, destined to be an adventure game classic (will the Miller brothers ever fail to produce classics?) it may not please everyone. Its puzzles may be too difficult for some to solve without the aid of a walkthrough and, as already noted, the step-by-step player movements may be disconcerting to some players. Some may also experience a glitch playing sound files (we did).

However, to those who criticize the game for lacking originality and not breaking any new ground, we say, "Hogwash!" *Riven* is a brand new world with brand new art illustrating a brand new story. It is primordial, allegorical, visionary, detailed, completely original, and almost perfect! CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: Its graphics, are exquisite. Its story is allegorical and visionary.

MISSES: Some may quarrel with its slideshow movement patterns, or experience a glitch playing some sound files.

LAST WORD: It is a visionary, exquisitely produced, masterpiece of science fiction.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	28
Playability	18
Originality	10
Graphics	18
Sound & Music	10
Physical Components	9

OVERALL **98**

Dark Earth

by Alan Fusco and Michael Fusco

ADVENTURE GAMES - HUMM- MM. What can you really say about them? Has anything new or innovative come to this genre since the first *Quest for Glory*? Sure there have been great strides in graphics, but overall, gameplay is always pretty much the same: talk to characters, solve puzzles, fight bad guys, and make it to the end of the story. The Achilles heel in these games is usually the character inter- action. "Let's see —should I play the multi- ple guess game (should I answer A, B or C) or guess what the parser wants?" Tired of the same old thing, Kalisto Entertainment has tried to take *Dark Earth* to the next level. Whether they have succeeded is up to the player.

Dark Earth is set in 24th century, approximately 300 years after a wave of asteroids have collided with the earth. The collision killed most of the population, completely changed the climate of the earth and plunged it into darkness. Slowly, mankind recovered, building metallic cities (Stallites) under mystical shafts of sunlight which pierce the darkness. A caste system has evolved and the population has become sun worshipers. The Lightdwellers live in the cities while the Wanderers have either chosen or been forced to live in darkness. Lightdwellers are divided into the Sunseers (priests), the Guardians of Fire (military under the command of the Sun- seers), the Builders (craftsmen), the Providers (farmers and hunters) and the lowly Scavengers. Society in the Stallites revolves around the worship of the sun and the sun god, the Great Solaar. The player takes the role of Arkhan, a Guardian of Fire in the city of Sparta. Very early in the game Arkhan saves the life of the great Sunseer Lory, but becomes contaminated with the darkness, a disease which is slowly turning him into a beast. Arkhan must not only find a cure for himself, but also save the city from a plot which would

Arkhan and his father the Sunseer Rylsadhar.

plunge Sparta into darkness forever.

Kalisto spent a lot of time developing the story line of *Dark Earth* and it shows. In fact, the story is the highlight of the game. Discovering the plot and the past of the time before is a very intriguing aspect of the game. The graphics are beautiful and they provide a richly textured look and feel of a world in chaos. The consequences

of life in this sci-fi environment have been well developed. You would expect, for example, that in a world shrouded in dark- ness green plants are scarce, as is lumber. Therefore, in Sparta, all the buildings are made of metal. The graphics reflect this so

well you can almost taste and smell the metallic world. In addition to the strong graphic design elements, Kalisto deserves credit for using something other than a noble cause to motivate the character. He must find a cure for darkness, or die. Cast- ing aside all pretenses at "nobility" ("I will save the city Sparta regardless of what hap- pens to me"), the player's own life is at stake. Not that Arkhan isn't noble, but the self preservation element is refreshing.

Unlike most adventure games, there are almost no dead-ends in *Dark Earth*. The designers made an effort to ensure that the player could complete the game through almost any course of action. You can go through the game killing everyone and everything that gets in your way (with a couple of exceptions) and still finish. Or you can be kind and virtuous. There are myriad routes to play out. If someone is really irritating (Armal Sadac comes to mind) you can kill him without worrying whether you have lost the game. Certainly, it is easier if you are helpful to most of the people you come across, but it's nice to know that it isn't necessary. This is certain-

A richly detailed bar, The Silver Reed and its owner Maor

ly a welcome departure from most adventure games.

The downside (or, depending on your viewpoint, the upside) to *Dark Earth* is the user interface. In one way it is elegant in its simplicity. On the other hand it is a frustrating experience for the seasoned adventure gamer. These gamers like the "illusion" of control of many games. The 'multiple guess dialog tree' and 'guess what the parser wants' are industry standards for an adventure game. While we all recognize that this really isn't control (always save before making a choice just in case), it does give the illusion of interacting with the world. Kalisto chose to give the user no real interaction with the world through dialog. The user simply picks a mood (dark or light), faces a person and presses the space bar. The mood will alter what and how something is said and thus affect the conversion, but it gives little sense of control. Even if one wants to ask character A about the secret crypt, it's not possible. True, that person may not have knowledge of such a crypt, but the fact one can't ask can be really frustrating. Kalisto's point here (yes, I did have an extensive talk with them) is to immerse the user in the story and not have

them worry about a parser or multiple guess dialog trees. After all, they claim, many adventure games are reduced to a game of guessing what dialog choice will advance the story. That may be true, but I also feel that giving the player the illusion of choice is extremely important. What the player is left with is hearing Arkhan speak, listening to the response, viewing some cut scenes and making some choices as to where to go next. The user can easily feel that *Dark Earth* is a throwback to the "interactive movie" games of a few years back – make a choice and watch a movie. Actually, *Dark Earth* is much more, but this was my initial reaction. It was only after extensive game play that I became immersed in the story. Then I began to accept, if not fully appreciate, the user interface.

Another choice that Kalisto made that will frustrate experienced gamers is the decision not to use the mouse for controlling Arkhan. Except for inventory and non-play screens, the mouse in not used. Arkhan is controlled by the arrow keys, and all interaction with the world is done using the space bar. Simply point Arkhan in the right direction and press the space bar. If he is pointing at a person, he will talk, if he can he will pick something up,

or read something etc. There are no commands to look, use and pickup, that adventure gamers are so fond of. Again, the results are sometimes frustrating where you want to look at something, but Arkhan doesn't know what you want. The computer is essentially guessing what you want to do. Again, the player doesn't feel in control. I admire Kalisto's approach. They felt that the mouse was not very intuitive to new users, in spite of Microsoft's hype (a fact that I can confirm from my dealings with computers neophytes). Thus they decided on a simple one-key-does-all interface. Another factor that went into this decision, was the desire to get away from the "hunt for the pixel I really need to complete the game" mindset so common in adventure games. Whether this all works is up to the user. I found it frustrating and I never really overcame this feeling. The overall gameplay made it less irritating as time went on.

The bottom line is if you can get past the user interface, or if you can appreciate it, you will find a rich and rewarding game in *Dark Earth*. CGE

The elevator down to the lower level of the city

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Beautiful graphics, a rich world, interesting story line and simple user interface.*

MISSES: *No choice of dialog and many interactive scenes that you have no control over.*

LAST WORD: *Simplistic user interface, which make this game most appealing to inexperienced players.*

Ratings

Dollar Value	80
Playability	82
Originality	81
Graphics	80
Sound & Music	84
Gameplay	82

OVERALL 82

Resident Evil *by Andy Backer*

RESIDENT EVIL IS A deliciously frightening story about seemingly unstoppable monsters who hide around corners and jump out of windows to ambush the player's characters. Reminiscent of the *Alone In The Dark* series, but graphically superior, it blends arcade action with adventure game puzzles. The Playstation hit sold more than two million units worldwide and has now been ported to the PC.

Players control either Chris Redfield or Jill Valentine of S.T.A.R.S (Special Tactics And Rescue Squad) who are sent to investigate a teammate's helicopter crash. At the crash site, the team is chased into a nearby mansion by a pack of monstrous creatures. They soon find that the house is filled with zombies, giant spiders, mutant dogs and other horrors — psychotic aftermath of a government project gone awry.

Resident Evil is a Windows 95 game only that requires a 3D graphics accelerator board. It works best with the Rendition chipset cards but also supports 3Dfx cards and the Matrox Mystique. Its graphics are detailed enough to make a player's skin crawl. The dogs are slaver-mouth monstrous and the zombies are right out of a player's favorite nightmare. Each time a dog jumps through a window or a character is surprised by a horde of zombies, *Resident Evil* jumpstarts the player's heart. The game is even more terrifying late at night.

Originally released in Japan as *BioHazard*, it has since become an international hit as *Resident Evil*. After a video introduction the game begins in the mansion. The members of the team split up to explore. When one of them disappears, the others begin a search for him. His body is discovered while a zombie is eating it.

Characters are provided with plenty of weapons and can choose to destroy monsters in a variety of ways — like shooting a

The entrance hall is where the game begins.

zombie in the head or ripping off its arm. All deaths are accompanied by a great deal of blood letting and should appeal to all gamers who think graphic violence is cool.

The musical score in *Resident Evil* is very effective — slow and eerie during non-action periods — appropriately intense during action sequences. Sound effects are also impressive. So is the deep voice at the beginning of the game that says, "*Resident Evil.*" It is almost as impressive as James Earl Jones saying, "This is CNN" on CNN.

Unfortunately, the game has some flaws. For the most part, the voice acting is B-movie quality. There is little correlation between a character's lips and the actor's words. The game's keyboard and joystick controls are often sluggish, making the game more difficult to play (it works best with a joypad controller). The port's most irritating feature is its Save Game option. It is the same as in the Playstation version. Characters have to find typewriter ribbons and use them on the typewriter in the entrance hall. This is not only time-consuming and awkward, but inconsiderate of PC players. It ignores a computer's memory and hard disk advantages. *Tomb Raider* had a limited Save Game option in its console version but featured unlimited

saves in its PC port. Why doesn't *Resident Evil?*

Although the game is two years old and no longer state-of-the art (especially on a PC) *Resident Evil* still delivers relentless, suspense-laden action in a graphically intense, fully accelerated, 3D world. Its puzzles are challenging, and the game provides many hours of gameplay. It's not as effective an action/adventure game as *Tomb Raider*, but it should still easily satisfy gamers—particularly horror fans. 🎮

OVERVIEW

HITS: *A frightening story with mood-enhancing music and sound effects.*

MISSES: *Not the best of PC ports. It has a limited save game feature and sluggish controls.*

LAST WORD: *Recommended for horror fans who think graphic violence is cool.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	97
Playability	97
Originality	90
Graphics	90
Music and Sound	95
Gameplay	95

OVERALL 93

Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror *by Andy Backer*

CIRCLE OF BLOOD was titled *Broken Sword* in Europe, so technically Virgin Interactive Entertainment's *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror* is really *Circle of Blood II*. Whatever its title, this superior adventure game again stars George Stobbart (American lawyer cum adventurer) and Nicole ("Nico") Collard (French journalist) as engaging a pair of series detectives, much like Nick and Nora Charles in *The Thin Man* movie series. George makes most of the funny remarks, but Nico holds her own.

The adventure begins just after George has returned to Paris to see Nico, his former girlfriend. She drags him along to an interview during which he gets knocked out and she gets kidnapped. Coming to, George finds himself tied to a chair; the only exit is on fire and a poisonous spider is crawling toward him. Escaping this dilemma is only the first of many puzzles George and Nico must solve. They've stumbled onto an intricate mystery, involving ancient Mayan artifacts, which takes them from Paris to Marseilles, the jungles of Central America, London, the Caribbean then back to Central America again.

As in *Circle of Blood*, the threads of the initial mystery lead to a dark and dangerous conclusion. Before the game ends, George and Nico must save not only each other's lives but the whole world as well.

"If it isn't broke, don't fix it," seems to be the developer's philosophy. Revolution doesn't break much new ground in *The Smoking Mirror*. The look, feel and mechanics of *Circle of Blood* have been pretty much left intact. The programmers have tweaked some things, however, in an effort to make what was already good enough even better. Inventory items are now lined up on the bottom of the screen. On top are icons for Options, Save, Load as well as Exit. Gone is the cumbersome travel map that came up only after the character went to the airport. Subsequent game modules automatically load after the current module has been solved. Characters are automatically taken to different locations, and animated cutscenes illustrate the means of transportation.

The game engine has been tweaked so that characters can be viewed moving between four layers of graphics. This is most effective in the jungle scenes, where the vegetation seems to engulf the characters. Shadows have been added to all of the settings and characters to make them appear even more realistic, while translucency effects enable characters to be seen behind smoke or glass.

The puzzles range from easy to difficult, but are always logical and part of the story. A few involve items found early in the game and needed in later modules, but most modules are self-contained adventures. Every item and character needed to solve a module is usually within it. The time-honored technique of trying out every item in the inventory on a puzzle works quite often, but it is foiled at times when items need to be modified or combined with others before they are usable. Solving such puzzles requires, as George says, "lateral thinking." They make gamers feel real good about themselves when they solve them.

The series has a variety of memorable and believable characters. Its writers and artists seem to know the locations and people they write about and illustrate intimately. The plot is pure fantasy, of course, but the characters and settings always seem authentic—except for a pair of Japanese teenage girls who briefly appear and are unfortunately stereotyped. Characterizations and settings are generally the series' strong suit.

Humor is also a plus. George always has something funny to say, and laughs abound throughout the game. There are even a few funny surprises, including a ghost and a talking goat. These surprises have a sort of Easter egg effect —they are not easily discovered, and they surprise and amuse the finder.

Circle of Blood was one of the top adventure games of last year, and *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror* is even better. It is fun to play, intelligently written, beautifully illustrated and has many satisfying puzzles to solve. What more could an adventure gamer want—outside of another sequel? **CGE**

George and Nico are in danger up to their necks.

OVERVIEW

HITS: It is fun to play, intelligently written, beautifully illustrated and has many satisfying puzzles to solve.

MISSES: There is little to quarrel with outside of one stereotypical characterization.

LAST WORD: The game is definitely one of the top adventure games of the year.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	95
Playability	93
Originality	93
Graphics	95
Sound & Music	94
Gameplay	94

OVERALL 92

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
• Pentium 100
• Quad Speed CD-ROM Drive
• 16MB RAM
• 16-bit High Color
• Joystick or gamepad

REVIEW

adventure

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain
by Andy Backer

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY of Kain is really more of an action/adventure game and not the "role-playing epic" the ads claim it to be. The central character does find weapons, spells and powers that enhance his abilities, but the game has none of the statistical elements which hardcore computer role-playing games expect. There is no character creation or experience points leading to level changes. There is very little interaction with NPCs. The player's alter ego would much rather cut throats than talk to anyone (although he does have to engage in a limited number of conversations to gather some clues).

Kain is the player's alter ego and has the kind of harsh personality that not even a mother could love. He hates all living creatures and spends most of the game laughing as he slaughters the innocent along with the guilty. He begins the game as just an arrogant nobleman but, after he's murdered, a sorcerer turns him into a revenge-seeking, blood-sucking vampire.

The player navigates Kain through the towns, crypts, and countryside of a large, dark and sinister world. The game world and all of its 3D-rendered characters is mostly viewed from above—although there are also several dazzling cutscene movies illustrating key events in the game. Kain picks up weapons, spells, and powers along the way. The weapons and armor Kain finds are helpful but many have disadvantages as well. A flame sword, for example, may burn an opponent to a crisp, but Kain can't suck blood out of a piece of toast. As the game progresses, Kain's urgent need for blood even requires him to use a magic spell that can transfer a victim's blood ten feet through the air directly to his thirsty mouth.

There are puzzles to solve, mostly of the pull-a-lever or step-on-a-pressure-plate to open-a-secret-door variety. Other puzzle solutions require spells that can change Kain into a werewolf, a colony of bats, a

Not recommended for the squeamish.

cloud of mist or an innocuous peasant. A werewolf can leap over chasms and a cloud of mist cannot be harmed by water. An innocuous peasant can more easily talk to the NPCs. Combat is a puzzle in that the player has to figure out how to only stun and not kill Kain's victims, so that Kain can suck their fresh blood.

Blood Omen was one of the most critically acclaimed console games and continues to be a success on the Sony PlayStation. This PC version plays almost the same as the PlayStation version, but not quite. The port retains the PlayStation's limited save game feature. The player is only allowed to save games at a few key places, something particularly annoying to PC players used to being able to save anytime, anywhere.

The graphics are the same in both and range from dazzling to too-dark-to-see-anything, but the console's best features, sound effects and music are not as vibrant on the PC. The actors providing the characters' voices are the same — often over the top, but so is the dialogue they are forced to interpret. Simon Templeman, who portrays Kain, is especially effective at performing Gothic novel dialogue with biting cynicism.

Some of the action is choppier on the

PC than the console version, and the game's keyboard and joystick controls are over-complicated and sometimes sluggish. Combat is eventually repetitive and, instead of being able to explore at will the player, must travel a linear path from location to location.

Although the game has an unusual but interesting story, over 84 hours of gameplay and Kain is the most repulsive but still charismatic anti-hero in adventure game history, it is difficult to recommend it to players other than those who like walking on the dark side. Players who enjoy playing *Blood, Carmageddon,* or *Dungeon Keeper* may find *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* equally as appealing. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Over eighty hours of gameplay and an intriguing story.*

MISSES: *Limited save game feature and linear game play.*

LAST WORD: *Not recommended for the squeamish.*

Ratings

Dollar Value	95
Playability	90
Originality	91
Graphics	90
Music and Sound	65
Gameplay	85

OVERALL 86

Magic: The Gathering Spells of the Ancients

by Allen Rausch

THE SAGA OF MICROPROSE'S *Magic: The Gathering* is a long and tortuous one. Delays, rumors, acrimonious words on the Internet and a final product that, when released, wasn't quite everything it had been cracked up to be. Microprose, however, determined to put its money where its mouth is, has continued to support the product with a steady stream of updates, bug patches and on-line support. Now, with the release of *Magic: The Gathering — Spells of the Ancients* (SotA), the game is (almost) everything MicroProse promised it would be.

The first thing gamers have to note is that the product is still *Magic: The Gathering*. The appeal of the product is based on how well you liked the original card game. If you're not a *Magic* fan and have no interest in becoming one, SotA is unlikely to change your mind. Although SotA updates the video tutorial to take into account new rules changes, it doesn't really make the game more accessible to newcomers. If you are a *Magic* fan, however, SotA has a lot of things to like.

To start with, the game contains 130 new cards to play with. The cards are drawn from the Unlimited, Arabian Nights, Antiquities and very rare and hard to find Promotional cards. Among these new cards are player favorites such the Juzam Djinn and dual lands such as Bayou and Underground Sea. The choice of cards was actually an interesting one. By giving players the opportunity to play with many of these powerful, rare and out-of-print cards (many of which have been banned from play), MicroProse was demonstrating its intention to create the complete *Magic* experience on the PC. For most players, the MicroProse game may be their only opportunity to use these cards.

The game's AI has been drastically upgraded since the original release of the original game. Although a number of patches have been released since the game's launch, SotA integrates all of those improvements and expands on them to take advantage of the new cards. The AI certainly isn't perfect and still gets lost when chaining too many card effects together, but the gameplay between version 1.0 and SotA is like night and day. This is mostly evident in the Shandalar portion of the game, where the AI has not only been enhanced to incorporate the new cards but now provides more challenge by gradually ramping up your opponent's decks.

Although the game does not come with the ManaLink, the program that will finally allow Internet multiplay, MicroProse seems aware of this shortcoming and is taking steps. Most of the remaining enhancements seem designed to prepare the game for its eventual multiplayer component. SotA comes with several options that allow players to play in a "sealed deck" tournament with up to 16 players. Sealed Deck Tournaments provide players with a certain number of unopened *Magic* card packs. The challenge is to take these random cards and make them into the best deck you can, then climb through the ranks in an elimination match.

Players can also use a new face design module to create the look of their character. Players can choose from different races, sexes and appearances and then customize them with different hair, beards, clothing and accessories. The game will also store personal profile information such as names, nicknames, addresses and quotes that appear underneath your portrait. Again, the obvious purpose for this is to prepare the game for eventual multiplay.

When SotA first arrived at the office, a number of people asked whether a mere expansion set was worthy of a full-blown review. After installing SotA, though, it became more than obvious that it deserved the coverage. In a nutshell, all expansion sets should be done this well. SotA provides greatly expanded playability, a host of new and improved features, and it cleans up many of the nasty bugs and interface problems that have been nagging at the original game since it's completion. The set's not perfect by any means, the graphics in the face maker are a bit cheesy, the interface is still a bit unforgiving when it comes to trying to undo a mistake, and it's still missing multiplay. By and large, though, SotA is more than worth the price you pay for it.

It contains 130 new cards to play with.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *130 new cards, new Tournament options, AI upgrades, new decks.*

MISSES: *Does not include multiplayer link, a few interface problems.*

LAST WORD: *It took 'em a while, but Microprose is well on its way to bringing the true M:TG experience to the PC.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	90
Playability	86
Originality	86
Graphics	95
Sound & Music	90
Gameplay	93

OVERALL 90

What are you willing to SACRIFICE for the ride of your life?

Jump into one of 16 tricked-out-megahorse-power-street-cars and lay down some significant rubber. You and up to 16 other uncivilized drivers now can race on dozens of random and twisting city streets, desert terrains and country tracks. Sure, the weather conditions change on you from thunderstorms to dense fog, but don't

Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far *by Brian Workman*

SILVER CGE CGE MEDAL

The flame-throwers add some nice graphics and realism to the game.

THE ORIGINAL GAME, *Close Combat,* was different from all of the other wargames out there. It played in real time and used a psychological model to recreate the effects of stress on soldiers in combat. This was a leap in gaming of this type, as it required the player to learn some leadership skills in order to fare well during play. As with any game, there were some complaints, but the game itself was different enough to elicit a core following of very devoted players. As with any game with a core following, a sequel was soon to follow; it is now releasing after more than a year of work by Atomic Games and Microsoft. *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* takes all of the good points from the original game and adds many improvements.

Many World War II battles continue to fascinate not only historians, but wargame players as well. The Battle of the Bulge, The Battle of Britain, and other battles that do this are usually characterized by ingredients that allow the battle to either swing one way or the other with small changes in strategy; others are characterized by battles that, by the nature of their complexity, challenge the player. Operation Market Garden is one of the latter types of battle. Staged in September of 1944, this battle was Montgomery's plan to end the war early. It was a bold and very risky initiative, with little chance

of success. But the reward, if the plan worked, was worth the gamble.

The idea of the plan was to thrust up through the Netherlands, capturing the bridges and roads to bring about a cut off of German forces in the west and allow the allies access to the industrial heartland of Germany. This required the dropping of airborne troops to secure key bridges and hold them until heavier ground forces could arrive. If the plan had worked, it would have cut months from the war in Europe. The end results were much different, though, as the title for the game implies, for the bridge at Arnhem was the "bridge too far."

Atomic Games has covered this battle before: Their *V for Victory: Market Garden* is one of the best simulations of the battle ever pro-

duced. This previous experience along with its award-winning experience from the original *Close Combat* combine to make this a great game. This sequel is not just new maps and pieces added to the original engine; the entire game went under the knife, so to speak. *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* is absolutely new; its biggest changes are, in fact, its maps and adjustments made to gameplay.

The maps are pre-rendered in 16-bit color which not only allows them to scroll faster but adds detail and sharpness. It is now much easier to tell what is going on during the battles. The troops are slightly larger, and the buildings are now to scale. This eliminates several of the complaints made about the original game.

The interface has also been changed, making all the game functions more accessible and easier to use. A strategic layer, which allows the player to choose where to fight next, has been added. Additional changes now let the player issue orders during deployment as well as

allow the customization of forces prior to battle. New forces will include a few new units, for a total of 130 different kinds, including British and Polish forces as well as American and German units. The most requested addition to the original game was a flame-thrower, so Atomic has implemented several kinds. There are also new German armor and half-tracks, American-made Firefly tanks and others. Other changes include facilities which allow troops to sneak attack, crawling on their bellies, until they've reached their locations. The new game also provides buildings of multiple stories, and so elevation effects now come into play.

The scope of the game is quite large, with the player having the ability to fight as the Germans or the Allies, single player vs the AI and multiplayer play. There's a total of 33 individual battles, 11 small operations and 4 campaigns for the player to choose from. There is also a scenario generator option called the Battlemaker. The Grand campaign is the entire battle from start to finish, and the other three are portions of the Grand campaign. During the operations or campaigns, the player can —and frequently will — get kicked off the territory already gained onto another map. There are four difficulty options for play: Recruit, Veteran, Hero and Custom. This added feature renders the troops fearless, which may not be very
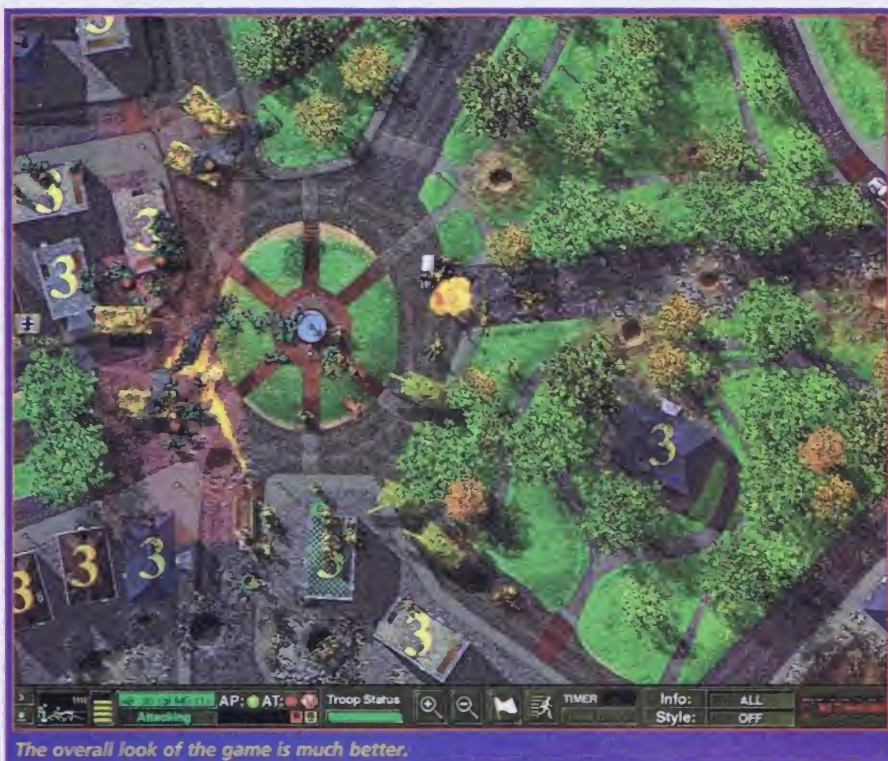
The overall look of the game is much better.

realistic. It does, however, make the game more like a conventional wargame.

Never ever use the Move Fast command with your tanks; obeying this command will cause them to expose their weak sides or rear to the enemy. With the Move command, though, the tanks in your force will even back up to get to their destination

while holding their thicker frontal armor toward the enemy. Try to stay out of dense terrain with your tanks; anti-tank weapons hiding in this type of terrain will almost always defeat your armor. Move your troops in short jumps; longer movement orders tire them out quickly and lower their effectiveness. Lastly, avoid bunching up the infantry units, for well placed mortar or artillery fire can quickly wipe out a large force.

All in all, the end result is a game that is significantly different from the original in a package that is easy to play and "explosive." *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* should be a winner in the Christmas sales wars. A well-deserved victory, indeed.
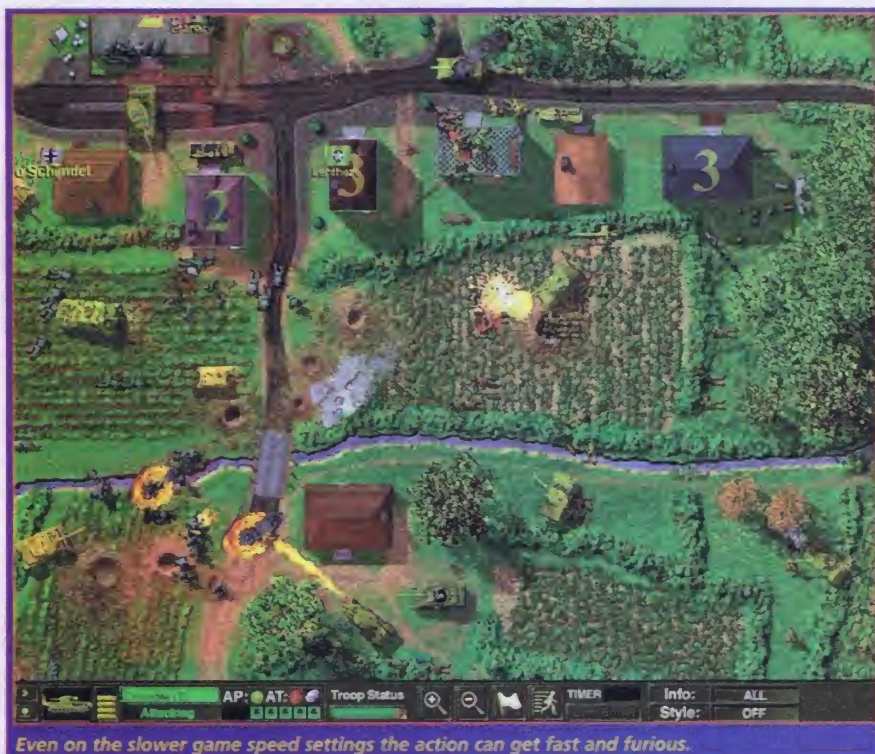
Even on the slower game speed settings the action can get fast and furious.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Greatly improved graphics and better interface than the original.*

MISSES: *This game may actually be too difficult for some players.*

THE LAST WORD: *This is not just a sequel, it is an entirely new game from the ground up.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	90
Playability	87
Originality	83
Graphics	87
Sound & Music	86
Gameplay	90

OVERALL 87

Fallout *by Andy Backer*

INTERPLAY HAS PRODUCED the most radioactive computer role-playing game of the year — and also the most addictive. Fallout just about glows in the dark, it's that good. It's even bigger and better than *Diablo*, although it doesn't have Diablo's multiplayer features.

Brian Fargo, Interplay's CEO, wanted an updated *Wasteland*, and he got it. *Wasteland* was created and published by Interplay in 1986. It was a non-fantasy role-playing game about human mercenaries who used modern military weapons to help a struggling civilization recover from a devastating nuclear war. That's pretty much what *Fallout* is all about, too.

Interplay demonstrates its story-telling expertise in the game's brilliant introduction. While the TV screen is black, we hear a crooner warbling on an old phonograph record. Immediately following is an old black-and-white commercial about a nuclear bomb shelter. We then see a black-and-white newsclip about the war in Canada showing two American soldiers in mechanized suits of armor executing a kneeling Canadian on the streets (clearly a parody of the infamous photograph of a Vietnamese officer shooting a kneeling victim in the head). The Americans wave as the camera dollies back to reveal a TV set on top of a pile of rubble. The phonograph needle sticks in a record groove and the crooner repeats, "maybe," several times; then all is silent. The picture on the TV fades to black.

The good stuff doesn't end there. It just keeps going on and on like an Energizer bunny. It continues through character creation where there are so many options from which a player can choose that no two characters need be alike. Each character created is customizable to a player's exact wishes. There are three ready-made characters but even they can be modified. Besides having traditional attributes such as Strength, Endurance and Agility, characters also have a laundry list of skills, such as Small Guns, Big Guns and Energy Weapons. Players select the three skills they want to develop faster than the others. They then select two optional traits, such as Gifted and Skilled, from a trait list.

At creation and also after each level gained by their character, players get a certain amount of skill points that they can distribute. Every three or four levels, players also get to choose a Perk for their character. The Perks are chosen from another list which includes beneficial character modifiers such as Educated and Toughness.

All of these character skills make the game "role-playing heaven," especially suited for players who enjoy personalizing their characters down to the smallest detail. Players are also allowed to choose the age and sex of a character as well as his or her name.

The game is essentially a single-character game, with a graphic look similar to *Diablo* (SVGA, third person, viewed from above). Players can find NPC companions as they play, e.g., Ian, a mercenary is available in Shady Sands, and Dogmeat, a dog, is available in Junktown. Traveling through the game with a faithful junkyard dog as a companion is a real joy. Human companions will take orders and even allow the player access their inventories. The dog has no inventory, is completely independent, but can be healed when he

Talk to people to get information.

is hurt.

The character animations are superbly detailed and change as soon as the character equips a weapon. If the weapon is a knife, the character is shown flipping it during idle moments. S/he'll eject a gun's used cartridges and sling a rifle to his or her shoulder. The dog is amazingly realistic and will pace restlessly to and from his master.

As charming as the animations are, the bread and butter of the game is its story line and the quests. The plot is complex. There are over 50 possible quests, all developing either the game's main plot or its many subplots. There are alternate solutions to most quests. Some are quite puzzling. The first one is the most difficult to complete.

In order to save the population of the character's home Vault from dying of thirst, the player must find an electronic purifying device called a Water Chip. The Vault only has a 150-day supply of drinkable water left. If the player does not complete the quest in time, the game ends (a 100-day extension is available, but the player has to discover it).

After leaving the Vault and battling his or her way through a cave full of rats in order to reach the surface, the character

stumbles onto a hot spot which reveals the World map. It is a top-down view of the world with a list of locations with hot buttons. At the beginning of the game there are only two locations on the list, Vaults 13 and 15. Since the player comes from Vault 13, s/he'll want to head for 15. But first s/he should pick up some rope in Shady Sands to climb down 15's broken elevators. Shady Sands is East of Vault 13—just across the mountain range.

Shady Sands also has a village full of people, some of whom have information about other locations to explore; others have short and easy quests for the player. One of them is to destroy a nest of Rad Scorpions. It's a good quest for gaining experience points and for learning more about combat.

Combat is turn-based and players, while fighting, have several options from which to choose. Different weapons have different options. A knife can thrust or slice. Guns can fire a single shot or a burst of shots at a time. The player also can choose to target his or her weapons on a specific body part in order to wound, cripple or kill an enemy. Depending on the Violence option chosen, the combat animations may be tame or gory. The default is seeing victims cut in half by gunfire, melting into piles of goo or exploding into chunks of flesh.

It's quite easy to die in this game. Creatures, such as Rad Scorpions, can poison characters.(Doctor in Shady Town, however, makes an excellent antidote). They can also be lethally contaminated by

I wonder if this super mutant knows how ugly he is? (ED - Allen needs a make-over)

radiation. A Geiger counter will show how much a player's character has been radiated; here again, there are medicines to help control it. A Doctor in the Brotherhood of Steel can cure it.

On the down side, *Fallout's* interface is complex and not intuitive. The player must read the manual to understand many of the game's features. Players may not know that their character has had a level raise and has skill points to distribute. Even though the information appears in the scrolling text box, it can be easily overlooked. The best recourse? Players should push the Character button on the interface bar and check out for themselves their character's status. The manual also instructs players to right click on the active weapon to choose one of the various weapon modes, including Burst, Single Shot or Targeted.

There may also be some awkward moments when a character can't leave the room he's entered because the exit is blocked by a wandering NPC. Players should first wait for the NPC to wander some more; they may even find that they have to reboot to resolve the situation. Players may also become disconcerted when they find that their hard disk space is being stolen by save games. Although the save games start out small, they grow as the game progresses. There are only ten slots available, but they may eat up 80 - 100 megs of hard disk before the game is finished. These are small quibbles in an otherwise magnificent game.

Who said CRPGs are dead? They are certainly alive and well in 1997. *Lands of Lore II* looks good and we have high expectations for *Might and Magic VI*, but neither game will have a more detailed system of character development, game-play, or story line than *Fallout's*. Toting guns and firing bullets may not appeal to everyone, but the game's realism will provide a welcome change of pace for many. Ya pays yer money and takes yer cherce.

Here I am with Dogmeat, dressed up in my new power armor suit.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Its detailed system of character development, game-play, and story line.*

MISSES: *Nothing significant—one can quibble about its save game's being too large, but that's about it.*

THE LAST WORD: *It's the most addictive role-playing game of the year.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	90
Playability	90
Originality	88
Graphics	89
Sound & Music	93
Gameplay	89

OVERALL 90

Sid Meier's Gettysburg *by Peter Suciu*

The Yankees are on the move.

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, fought in the small Pennsylvania town, from July 1 to July 3 1863, is often considered the turning point of the Civil War. Historians and Civil War buffs have argued about what a Southern victory would have meant for their cause and what effect an alternate outcome would ultimately have had for the Union. Whether any of this matters and what is really true is immaterial, because the battle has become one of most celebrated events of the war. It has spawned debate, countless books and even a Ted Turner film. But more than anything else the Battle of Gettysburg, and the events of those hot days in 1863, means games and there have been a ton of simulations about the engagement. SWFTE produced the horribly simplistic click and point version in 1993, which was even used as a loose tie-in for the film, while Talonsoft's *Battle Ground* series version of the effects was decent but never really captured the real spirit of the armies of the Blue and the Gray. That spirit has finally come alive in a desktop version of the battle, produced by a true master of instant classics, Sid Meier, the creator of *Civilization* and *Pirates*.

Sid Meier's *Gettysburg* manages to do what many similar takes on the great conflict have failed to do—take the events of the battle and present them with epic grandeur, while keeping them simple to play and without getting bogged down with too many rules. This was essential since Sid Meier has a devoted following, due in large part to the fact that his games are easy to play and addictive. *Gettysburg* is in many ways a departure for Meier and is based on a totally unique and new gaming engine the first since *Civilization*. *Colonization* a near classic in itself was part war game and was based on the *Civilization* engine but there was no way

this style of game could be adapted for the events, both glorious and tragic, of the Civil War. Instead, Meier has taken everything that has seemed to work in an epic battle simulation, thrown out what didn't work, mixed it up with a nice and easy real-time flow. The result is a new Sid Meier classic.

The first impressive feature of the game is that in true Meier fashion, players can jump in without looking at the manual. Did anyone ever look at the manual to play *Civilization*? No, the game was loaded up and people played. The manual was only there so players could learn how to make the game better and take advantage of the extra detail. In keeping with that fine tradition, *Gettysburg* can be played, and enjoyed, without ever opening the manual. Yet, like all of Meier's previous efforts, the booklet is jammed with information about the smallest details. While some serious war gamers may take the time to read all the way through, those who loved *Civilization* will be too busy playing the game It works either

way, which makes it that much more fun.

Game play is set in semi-real time rather than strictly turn based. This makes the individual games much shorter since units can be given orders while the player concentrates on more pressing matters elsewhere on the battlefield. The forces are organized into the type of units of the day including infantry, cavalry and artillery. They appear on that map in the size of regiments. The regiments are grouped together as brigades, and lead by a brigade commander. After a couple of quick games, it becomes quite apparent why a chain of command is needed. To aid the player, as overall leader of the battle or engagement, commander units oversee their own forces, providing support and helping to keep morale up. In addition to controlling and ordering individual units, a player can give an order to a commander unit who in turns directs his forces. Some commanders are obviously better than others. Players should also make sure to keep the commanders near their own regiments, because that is where they

provide the best support. A commander without men to lead quickly becomes just another soldier on horseback getting in the way.

Overall control of the forces is incredibly easy in *Sid Meier's Gettysburg,* and units can be directed and redirected at almost any time. While the player can't just point at a map and give the orders to his/her commanders, the game is almost that simple. Each individual regiment unit or full brigade is commanded from a tool bar that appears at the bottom of the screen. The tool bar varies according to the type of unit (infantry and artillery are very different) as well as the size of the forces (an individual unit's order bar is quite different from that of a brigade commander). The tool bar lets the player tell the units in which direction to march, whether to advance, retreat, or when to charge into action. In addition, this bar directs the forces to form columns for marching or breaking into skirmish lines. Novice players might not notice that the bar also allows the player to monitor information about his/her units including morale of the unit and their experience. It even let the units know when they are not attacking or being attacked, that they should entrench themselves for better protection. The tool bar also indicates what type of terrain the regiment occupies. A group of men surrounded by thick woods, for example, is well protected from enemy fire. Those men are going to

Did someone say watch your flank?

want to stay put and let the enemy come to them, rather than head out to a wide open cornfield.

The player can also monitor battle stress of each unit as well (and good commanders will heavily rely on this information...while megalomaniac style players will just "charge" as often as possible). Casualties and double quick marches, as well as moves which take the entire battle in skirmish formation or which keep making those daring charges, will add battle stress. Units that have taken a lot of stress

(like defending Little Round Top from relentless attacks) will suffer. These units will have a less effective rate of fire. They will retreat more often and finally they will rout and flee to safety, becoming totally uncontrollable until a commander can marshal them back into action. Another excellent reason to keep commanders safe at hand and near by. The style of game varies greatly depending on which side is being commanded. Like the real battle, the Northern forces must defend their positions and keep the Army of Northern Virginia from overrunning key points and then breaking through and making their way onto Washington. As the Southern player, it is necessary to defeat the Union Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg and bring victory to the Confederacy. The overall battle is actually played out in small individual scenarios (which can also be played in any order—the game also has special non-historical, speculative scenarios) which keep the game flowing while also giving great breaks to the player. No one needs to be up until 4:00am because they were waiting for a good point to stop.

When fighting computer controlled forces, the level of difficulty is determined by the competency level of the overall commander—Union forces would find it easier to face Heth or AP Hill instead of Longstreet or Lee. Personality also plays a role and the computer's leader can be made Aggressive, Prudent or Cautious mixed with a nature that is Indirect, Flexible or Direct. Different names are provided

Got those Rebs on the run at Little Round Top.

Sid offers some excellent advice.

Tactical Tip

This regiment is protected by entrenchments and will suffer fewer casualties in battle.

No Tips   OK

with these options and give a nice background perspective. Lee is Prudent and Flexible, the same as his real world opponent Meade. U.S. Grant is Aggressive and Direct while Stonewall Jackson is Aggressive and Indirect. As noted by the use of Grant and Jackson's names, not all of these leaders were actually at the battle but rather they are present in style and spirit. There forces are lead the way they would have been had they been there. It is interesting to see a true what-if game unfold, as it is seeing what the designers thought of these famous general's style of warfare (note: Stonewall Jackson had already been killed by this point in the war, but the game does provide an excellent "speculative scenario" where Jackson not Lee leads the attack on the first day that started the battle.).

Unlike a turn-based game, the player needs to make some quick decisions and has to react. Orders are given, units move and then it's onto the next situation. By zooming in and out of the map, players can monitor small engagements between brigades, or get a whole view of the battlefield and determine where to move forces. It must be noted, however, that only enemy units in a clear line of sight are visible, so players shouldn't rely too much on the full map except as guide to their own forces. These two elements, the quick decisions and the fact that the opponents forces may be hidden, makes Sid Meier's Gettysburg quite challenging. Players don't have time to seriously think about

the direction of each unit, and that makes the game quicker and in many ways easier to play while also making it more realistic. After all, battles like Gettysburg are won and lost in split second decisions.

Players do, however, have the benefit of aids that were unavailable to Lee or Meade in July of 1863. The game speed can be slowed down and even paused so players can get a better sense of the situation at hand. Players also have a several settings, including an overview map (to determine where all of the friendly units have gone off to), finding the fighting (to center on the heaviest fighting currently being engaged), finding the scenario objective and also setting line of sight which provides elevation information. The map can also be cleared of everything of except units, but hidden enemy forces will still stay hidden.

The graphic detail of Sid Meier's Gettysburg is comparable to the TalonSoft Battleground series, with a bit more refinement. The units are clearly recognizable as infantry, artillery or cavalry, although commanders can be confused with cavalry, especially with a wide zoom, and the colors are clearly blue or gray. The map can be rotated and the terrain is decently rendered. Attention to detail is notable, especially when the map is zoomed in tight, where individual units appear to fire, with flashes of smoke, and then reload. Each unit is fully animated and the dead litter the battlefield, rather than fading away. The terrain is also excel-

lently rendered though it does not seem to suffer damage from the battle. Other than those unfortunate enough to have fallen in battle on the fine streets of the town, Gettysburg fares quite well and suffers little damage. This is not to say that the designers should have made it possible to level the town with artillery, but some damage should be evident.

The sound effects are excellent, with artillery blasting off in the distance accompanied by the victorious cheers of advancing infantry. Each scenario begins with a voice over of two commanders discussing the situation over a map (an arm will make an appearance to point to a key point for effect), while victory and default are accompanied by some grainy footage of re-enactors fighting a generic battle. The video segments are unnecessary and distracting (there are even some anarchistic moments like re-enactors in Confederate "Butter-nut" colored uniforms from a time other than this engagement).

Overall, the Battle of Gettysburg may have turning point in the American Civil War and then again, it might have resulted in little change in the Southern cause even with a victory for Lee. Sid Meier's Gettysburg might not make any great changes in war gaming, people will still play turn-based games and true real-time simulations but this Gettysburg is destined to become yet another instant classic. It will also make war gaming accessible to those who don't have the understanding or patience for movement points, advancing fire, line of sight and all the other things that make those turned-based games more realistic than the average real-time strategy game. The bottom line is that Sid Meier's Gettysburg is simple, it looks great and it's fun. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: Easy to jump into and play without looking at the manual.
MISSES: It only covers the one battle! I want more!

THE LAST WORD: Fun and simple yet realistic and challenging. Sid does it again.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	95
Playability	90
Originality	89
Graphics	90
Sound & Music	92
Gameplay	95

OVERALL **92**

REVIEW

Man of War

by Peter Suciu

NAVAL COMBAT reached its glorious peak during the period between the American Revolution and the end of the Napoleonic Wars. It was the age of wooden ships ... a golden age of powerful national navies... a time when the nations of the world realized that the navy needed to be as prim and proper as the army. The days of drunken sailors and gutter trash were over. The professional navy had arrived! It is therefore fitting that naval combat simulations of this era have also arrived in earnest, possibly following the success of classic buccaneer games such as Sid Meier's *Pirates*!

The latest and most interesting of the bunch has hit the high seas and offers a new approach to broadsides and tacking in the wind. *Man of War* (Strategy First/Virgin Interactive) has attempted a radical change in naval combat strategy games by providing a new view of ship movement, placement and combat. In addition to the typical overhead action of similar naval simulations, such as *Wooden Ships & Iron Men, Admiral: Sea Battles* and *Age of Sail; Man of War* presents the action in quasi-real time sequences and in a first-person perspective. During the movement/combat phases, the player, as Admiral of the fleet, experiences the action from the deck of the flagship. This allows players to get a new perspective of their orders being car-

You sank my battleship!

ried out as they happen; it also helps to give them a view of enemy placement beyond that which a map can provide.

The actual Organization of the fleet and the issuing of orders, however, are still determined on a map screen/orders screen in the form of naval flags — 15 in total, with a maximum of 12 orders being issued at a time. Players control individual ships by signaling with the flags with orders, rang-

ing from Pursuit to Surrender. Victorious admirals must endeavor to maintain a balance of caution, daring and bravery as they engage their enemies in combat. Experienced captains will know well enough to be on the qui-vive with regard to the direction of the wind and the location of their rival's vessels.

The real heart of the game — the actual ship movement and combat — is resolved during the 3D phases, where players have a deckside view of the action. This phase occurs in real time or can be sped up and even skipped. During the phase, players have a 360-degree view and can actually move around the deck of their flagship for the best view. Other ships, friendly or enemy, can also be viewed through a spyglass/telescope. This feature, however, doesn't accomplish much, and the ships viewed in this way all appear the same size. The spyglass feature works best if the ship being viewed is on
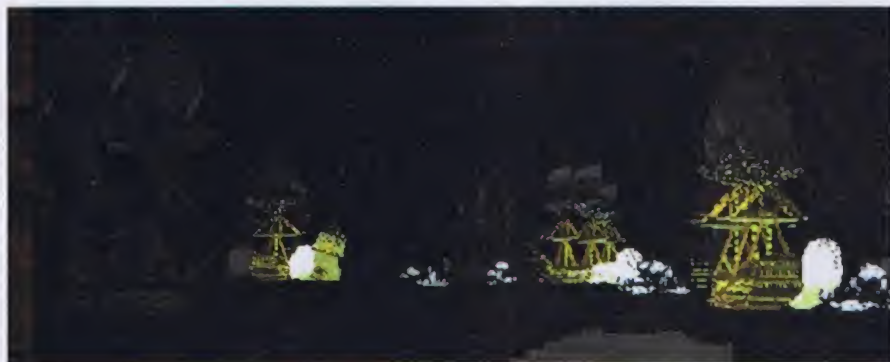
the edge of the horizon; it is not much use, however, when ships are closer.

Overall, the 3D phase gives a different and unique perspective to the game, but it isn't completely necessary for gameplay. Although this view is a nice feature — one which adds a new dimension to the game — it slows the overall gameplay. Since this is the phase where movement occurs, it's necessary; in the early turns,however, simply watching the map would have sufficed. The 3D phase is best in actual combat, but sometimes it can be a bit repetitive. In addition, if a ship is boarded, the player has little control over the actual events, as the same boarding sequence is used repeatedly. Actually, this is disappointing; the game could have done more with these sequences and round of play.

Man of War can be played as individual battles, complete with the ever-popular *Battle of Trafalgar*.The game, oddly enough, contains only 12 scenarios; *Age of Sail* had over 25, pretty much covering the same time period. Most of these missions are really the British against another nation. While it is true that most of the high seas battles of the era did involve the British, some combat between other nations might have made for an interesting variation. Although the final version of the game is also limited to one full campaign, from the British perspective (of course), Strategy First has promised additional campaigns which will be available from their Website.

Man of War does provide an excellent scenario editor so that additional engagements can be created. It also adds weather conditions and various settings, including nighttime battles, into the mix. When creating a scenario, players can determine the sailing class of their ships (to determine the speed and maneuverability) as well as crew quality. Ships range from a Schooner with two guns to huge Ships-of-the-Line with 800 men and 136 cannons! Naval battles in *Man of War* can be huge as well, with up to 150 ships for epic sea battles.

The game's Logbook (i.e., manual) provides an interesting overview of the naval rivalry between England and France or, for that matter, any other nation that attempted to build a powerful navy. In addition to each engagement's introduction, the background of the battle is presented in the manual in an objective way, giving the basic facts and overview. As far as providing information on how to play the game, however, the manual is lacking

Admiral Nelson prepares to engage the enemy at Trafalgar.

Direct hit!

and a bit unorganized but, then, *Man of War* is clearly meant to be a "jump in and play" kind of game.

The high seas are getting crowded, it seems, and *Man of War* has a real task at hand — that of staying afloat. As a late entry, many gamers may have had their fill of *Age of Sails* and *Wooden Ships & Iron Men*, but this game is a standout because of its first-person perspective, which should help give the game an edge over the competition. For those who missed the other two, board the *Man of War* and set sail.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Excellent view of ship combat. Original.*

MISSES: *Limited number of battles, only one campaign, and no control over boarding parties.*

THE LAST WORD: *The ground, or rather the seas, has been covered before, but Man of War's 3D action should provide fans of the era with something new.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	81
Playability	80
Originality	84
Graphics	81
Sound & Music	80
Gameplay	81

OVERALL 81

Total Annihilation *by Allen Rausch*

THE REAL-TIME, strategy wars have begun, and there are already a few contenders emerging from the ranks. There's Blizzard's upcoming *Starcraft*, Activision's *Dark Reign* and Microsoft's *Age of Empires*. With tough competition like this, you may wonder how could I get so excited about GT Interactive's *Total Annihilation (TA)*? At first encounter, it didn't look as spectacular as other games, it didn't have the most riveting premise in the world and I couldn't see what the big deal was over 3D units and terrain. I figured *TA* was another mediocre *C&C* clone. Well... I was never happier to be proven wrong.

TA does so many things right that it's actually easier to get the game's few drawbacks out of the way up front than to save it for the summary paragraph. To start with, the game's premise — a galactic war between two factions bent on (what else?) total annihilation — isn't very original or interesting. A few thousand years ago, so the story line goes, scientists in the galactic Core discovered a way to transfer human consciousness to machines; this was quickly made mandatory for all citizens. The people who still enjoyed living in their squishy bodies (the Arm) rebelled against the government and started cloning their greatest warriors. Now, thousands of years later, the galaxy's resources are almost depleted, and the two forces, reduced to pitiful remnants, are trying to finish each other off. In single player mode, the game takes you through 25 missions for each side, detailing the last campaign of the war.

The game's many units (150) vary in strengths and weaknesses, but the game plays pretty much the same no matter which faction you choose. The real problem, though, is that all units tend to look alike, making it very difficult at a glance to tell what type of units are on the battle-

The flame-throwers add some nice graphics and realism to the game.

field. It gets better, though, the longer you play the game; still and all, given the absolute necessity for performing combined arms actions, it's often vital that the correct units be in the correct locations. The similarity in appearance unnecessarily lengthens the learning curve, and this, in turn, could turn a new player off to Total Annihilation. That would be a shame, because a little digging reveals a game of both extraordinary depth and terrific fun.

As it is with most *C&C* clones, the harvest system is at the heart of the game. *TA* has two resources: inexhaustible metal supplies and easy-to-come-by energy. The control of metal deposits is absolutely vital. Your metal extractors will harvest metal quuickly when placed on top of deposits. Although they can also extract metal from anywhere on the map, but this is a much slower procedure than the former. As has already been stated, metal deposits never run out, so you can't play a waiting game in *TA*, building up a massive number of tanks in preparation for a final

assault, or picking away the enemy piece by piece. Giving the enemy room to breathe, even for a moment, will give them time to replenish their forces. This means that combined arms tactics are an absolute must in *TA*. Although there are many powerful units, none of them is a game killer; all of them have reasonable weaknesses. An assault on the enemy's base can begin with aircraft pounding at ground-based defenses while a few quick and light k-bots take out the anti-aircraft defenses and followed up by a mop up crew of heavy tanks. While these factories and construction bots are building, follow-up units — thanks to the game's interface — will trundle to designated staging areas where they can be useful, rather than piling up outside of the factory. Inexhaustible resources is an important feature in *TA*; it places a premium on genuine maneuvering and tactics rather than on cutting off a battle or stealing an enemy's resources.

Another interesting feature (one that

can be toggled on and off in multiplayer) is the player's Commander. The Commander is a very powerful bot. Tougher than any other bot in the game, the Commander builds and repairs much faster. He also has a devastating D-gun which can capture enemy units and buildings and eliminate most opponents in one shot. If your Commander gets killed, however,you lose the game. The Commander, all by himself, opens up all sorts of tactical possibilities. Diversionary attacks now become genuinely useful as you plot to strike at your enemy's Achilles' heel. You can use your commander on the front lines, risking the possibility he'll get killed, or you can keep him at your base, protected but woefully underutilized.

All of these elements, though, would be nothing without a powerful interface. *TA's* allows the player to take advantage of all the possibilities inherent in the game's design. *TA* more than lives up to that challenge. Several features in the interface allow the player to manage his/her forces with a minimum of fuss and bother. First units now have "behavior modes" which allow them to take care of themselves when you aren't watching. Units can "hold position," "maneuver" and "roam," depending on how much independence you need them to have. They can also be told to "hold fire," "shoot if shot at" and "fire at will." Combined with a system of movement waypoints and patrol modes, this makes setting up pickets and sending out scouts not only a viable possibility, but a breeze! Unit AI is pretty good, too, with soldiers behaving fairly sensibly, chasing away enemy units, but then dropping back if they come under heavy fire or have wandered too far from their assigned patrol stations.

The other big advantage the interface provides is something I like to call, "sensible commands" or, more loosely, the ability to queue up orders so that you
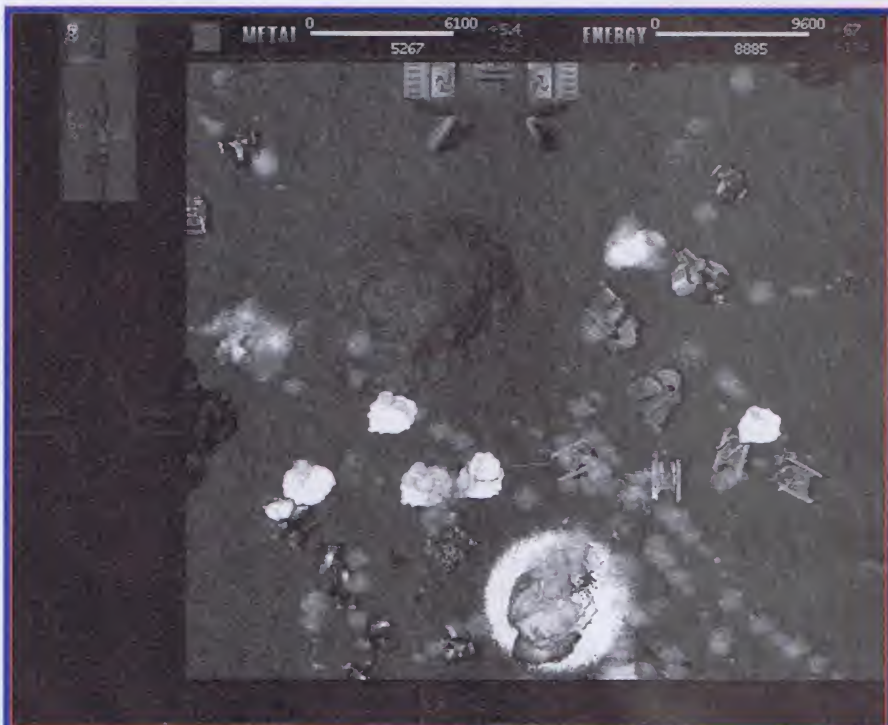
The overall look of the game is very cool.

Building up Power reserves should be your first concern.

don't have to constantly babysit your units. Production orders to factories can be stacked, so that while you're off conducting operations elsewhere, your factory is continuing to churn out units. Units coming off the production line can also be given default orders, such as moving to a designated staging area or moving into a patrol pattern. After absorbing an attack, you can launch a counteroffensive and return to your base where you may find that your entire defensive perimeter has been reconstructed in your absence — that's cool!

You can also queue up commands on units. If you want your Commander to repair a building, salvage a few smoking wrecks for metal, then lay down a line of laser towers, it's just a few clicks away. You can also right-click on a unit and get it to perform sensible actions. Right-click on a constructor bot with a group or tanks and they will move with and guard the bot, even to the extent of placing themselves in fairly smart positions near their charge. Right-click a group of constructor units and they will not only repair each other when damaged but join together on construction projects, making them go faster.

Unfortunately, space restrictions prevent me from going on at length about the other improve-

ments to the genre that can be found in *Total Annihilation*. I haven't mentioned the new strategies opened up by the true 3D terrain. I haven't discussed the improvements to the AI, or how much damn fun the game is when played in multiplayer. The bottom line is this: we game reviewers tend to be a pretty jaded bunch. We're constantly inundated by "incredible" games which usually turn out to be mediocre (if we're lucky) or (if we're not) trash. So when a game comes along which makes our hearts start thumping as *Total Annihilation* did, it's pretty special. *TA* is not perfect by any means, but in the real-time strategy war, new developer Cavedog has certainly come out swinging. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *150 different units with excellent balancing, superior unit AI, 3D terrain that affects combat, terrific player interface*

MISSES: *High-end CPU a must for multi-player, boring story line, units can be difficult to tell apart. Commander AI a bit too aggressive*

THE LAST WORD: *Kick ass!*

Ratings	
Playability	97
Originality	90
Graphics	90
Sound & Music	95
Dollar Value	95
Gameplay	97

OVERALL 95

Age of Empires *By Enid Burns*

A beautiful — and well protected Roman town

AGE OF EMPIRES, Microsoft's new entry into the strategy genre of computer games, combines the discovery and development of the turn-based game *Civilization* (MicroProse) with the action and combat from such category-killers made popular by Westwood's real-time game, *Command & Conquer*. Starting with minimal technology and advancing through many ages, which allow for technological development and improvements of buildings and units, the player's goal is to build a powerful civilization.

At the start of the game (as with most real-time simulations), there is a mostly blackened screen and the unexplored world, beginning with the most basic of structures. The player, in a commanding role over his/her civilization, must order the starting civilian units to explore and gather supplies. The supplies needed to maintain this struggling society are food, wood, stone and gold. Specialized build-ings must also be constructed for storing these stockpiles.

Each unit has specific tasks designated by the player. A villager can be assigned to collect wood, berries, stone or gold. The units can also build structures, hunt, explore and do battle with the use of primitive weapons. Should the need for a particular resource change, the units can be reassigned. Their experience for the new task starts at beginner level then develops. It is better to use experienced hunters to bring down the mighty elephant. They hunt better and are not as vulnerable, as a novice hunter might be, to the mauling that results. One problem the game can run into later is that there is a population cap. The computer will only allow a certain number of units to be produced. It is easy to build up villagers at the beginning to do the game's bidding, but they can get in the way later when units are required to fight and more skilled military members and priests need to be brought into the game.

The demands for supplies are high, and units must be spread thin in order to keep up with demand. Wood is needed to build buildings, ships and, later on, more

A quiet day at the seaside

advanced units. Food is needed to build new units. Stone is needed to build watchtowers. Gold becomes more necessary later on, as it is needed to build priests and pay for more advanced units. Both food and gold are necessary to advance to the new age. This game involves a great deal of resource management, as different supplies are used to produce structures and units; the resources at the start of the game are not replenished. If there are not enough trees, it will be impossible to build advanced ships and catapults to thoroughly conquer the Minoans (or other pesky opponent civilizations). A player must survey resources in the beginning of the game in order to plan for units and structures needed later.

As the game progresses, it is necessary to advance through the ages. The game starts in the Stone Age (unless the player chooses to start at a more advanced age), and must get through the Tool Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Each age has its own achievements. More buildings are introduced, often with additional research; more advanced units can be produced as well. In order to advance to the next age, it is required that at least two buildings of the current age be completed and that food and (for later ages) gold expenses be met. As far as the importance of advancing to the highest age, it is almost crucial, for opponents quickly advance, bent on eliminating any player not able to keep up with the brisk pace. Managing resources and units is the key to building an Empire and

Villagers make sacrifices to the Elephant God?

passing into the Ages.

As well as being assigned duties of gathering, villager units are required to construct buildings. A town center has already been built at the start of the game. Only a few options for additional buildings are available for construction at this point; these are the bare bones of what a small village needs to develop. More structures can be made, as advancements are met. Houses must be built in order to allow for the production of additional units. A granary is required to store berries and, later, grain. A storage pit must be built for storage of meat, wood, stone and gold. Also helpful are a port for fishing, trade, transport and battle ships and barracks to produce the most rudimentary of troops.

Although exploring is necessary — using units to explore by land and ships to chart out far-reaching islands, depending on the size of the map — the player usually encounters hunters and gatherers from other civilizations early on and warships and armies later in the game. Often, opponents build structures brazenly close to camp and start collecting resources from the immediate area. This instigates hostile attitudes and behavior, often encouraging going to war earlier in the game. It can be difficult and frustrating, but it is possible to make allies of the opponents. Many tributes and other acts of good will must be demonstrated to turn the arrogant rulers of other civilizations. Although it is much easier to play multiplayer and ally with networked opponents against the computer, you must watch out for the human players — they're more likely to take on the role of Judas.

There are several ways to win a campaign. Some controls must be determined before the start of the game. A player can choose from standard playing conditions: which blanket conquest or wonders, or which game is to be played to a specified time limit or score. The conquest condition is what it sounds like — last man standing or, in this case, last civilization standing. Playing the wonders condition can be

Total Chaos, death and destruction in progress.

Use natural resources to help defend cities.

somewhat tedious; here there are three options — find all ruins, find all artifacts, build a world wonder. Placed on each map is any number of up to 15 ruins and artifacts which are to be claimed. The ruins look like Stonehenge and will remain at a fixed position on the map. The structure turns the color of that playing team which most recently passed the ruin. The artifacts are carts which are also scattered throughout the map. These also turn the color of the controlling civilization and can be wheeled around to strategically safe locations. If found on an island off the main camp, the ruins can be transported by ship. No team can destroy either of these types of structures. If one civilization controls all ruins or all artifacts, a 2000-year counter starts (about 15 minutes of gameplay); if none of the structures is captured during the countdown, the controlling civilization wins the campaign. The same can be achieved if a civilization decides to build a wonder. This option is only available in the most advanced age; it uses a large number of resources and takes a great deal of time to build. It must be heavily guarded. Once the wonder is completed, the 2000 year counter starts. If the wonder is able to survive the time period without being destroyed by another civilization, the controlling civilization wins. It is often easier to play conquest and not worry about the artifacts, ruins or wonders; then,

again, it is challenging to try other conditions.

For the player who prefers an agenda instead of a random-mapped exploration and conquer, there are missions available for aiming at a more specified goal. One can choose to be the Yamato and go on an assassination mission. As a Babylonian priest, the player must convert or find means to eliminate the Elam and Akkad, the two established civilizations on the map. After completing the prepared selection of mission-based campaigns, the player can create customized scenarios. This process includes designing a map, choosing civilizations and other conditions. Then, from an extensive menu of options, the player must choose the circumstances of the mission. The growth of this game never stops.

The details of *Age of Empires*, no matter which setup is being played, are incredibly detailed. The villagers are animated in each of their duties. Units that fire projectiles, such as catapults, have recoil; archers cock their bows as they fire; the priests wave their arms to convert their enemies into believers of the faith; damaged structures start flaming — making a crisping sound — to announce they have been attacked and that they require repair; fish and whales jump out of the oceans, to indicate where boats can successfully fish. To complement the visual

qualities of the game, there is great, low keyed, new age score which plays continuously throughout. Each unit and effort at production has individual sounds to signal completion, responding to orders or sounds attack.

Age of Empires is one of the most anticipated games of the season and for good reason. It is captivating, involving and extremely addictive. The random map generator alone can account for years of satisfying gameplay, but there are still more options, more missions, more campaigns. Once the provided missions are exhausted, any number of customizable maps and scenarios can be created. *Age of Empires* may start at the beginning of time, but it will be played until the end of time. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Epic in design but can still be finished in one night...almost!*

MISSES: *"Wow! Look at the time!"*

THE LAST WORD: *Real-time meets Civilization. Need we say more?*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	95
Playability:	98
Originality:	95
Graphics:	94
Sound & Music:	100
Gameplay	100

OVERALL 97

REVIEW

Publisher:	*Avalon Hill*
Developer:	*Avalon Hill*
Telephone:	*(410) 426 9800*
Website:	*www.ahgames.com*

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
• Pentium 486 running Windows 3.1 or 95.
• 8MB RAM
• 2x CD-ROM.
• Super SVGA

Achtung Spitfire
by Peter Suciu

The Plane! The Plane!

CLIMB INTO THE COCKPIT of a British Spitfire or a Luftwaffe Me-109 for some dog-fighting action in the sky. After the German Army's spring French tour, the summer of 1940 was anything but the summer of love. The Battle of Britain, which began as Germany prepared to invade the U.K., was fought over the skies of that island nation. Avalon Hill's *Achtung Spitfire*, based on its immensely popular board game *Over the Reich*, puts players in charge of a squadron in the air war over Europe. Pilots must patrol the skies, make raids on shipping, bomb their enemy's cities and basically try to keep their planes in the air.

More of a board game for the computer screen than a flight simulator, *Achtung Spitfire* isn't meant for the serious flight sim fan. Nevertheless, World War II buffs will feel right at home with the design and execution of this game. The premise and gameplay are simple: players move and shoot (or shoot and move) their airplanes. There is no cover fire, advancing fire, etc., nor is there really a sense of flight maneuvering or fancy flying. In most cases, the air combat seems to take place more on a flat surface than in the air.

Game complexity, in both controls and the way opponents fight, is determined by rank/skill setting. The field of combat (in this case, the skies over Europe), is pretty much a flat surface except in the General (as in rank) skill level. Here the action is a little more complex, allowing pilots to experience loops, rolls and even negative Gs! Controlling the plane at each level is pretty much the same. For the most part, *Achtung Spitfire* is a point-and-click game, with the controls of each plane accessible from the mouse. Only in the harder levels (rank doesn't seem to have privilege here) do the pilots need to worry about speed, stalls and the effects of wild spins.

The missions mostly involve dogfights over Europe, but the game is nicely rounded out with bombing runs, anti-shipping and even strafing attacks. For quick games (under 15 minutes, usually), pilots can take part in a single air battle (the Dogfight) or Combat Mission, while longer campaigns, like the Tour Of Duty, offer more intense gaming. No, a network option is not available(something all too common from Avalon Hill), but the game does allow for play by e-mail. *Achtung Spitfire*, being a turned-based game, really isn't suited to this type of play, but the option is appreciated.

The graphic interface is easy to use and the QuickTime video is a nice feature, offering mini-cutscenes and actual combat footage. It's too bad that the footage is so limited; it wears pretty thin after a while. The dogfight scenes could also use some degree of variety, as it seems like every battle segment is fought over the same clouds! At least the icons for the planes are unique, but it was sometimes difficult to keep track of the individual aircraft.

Achtung Spitfire is the type of game that Avalon Hill (a company with its roots in deep military simulations) should be making. It's a war game with lots of historical detail and background — one suited to board game players. As with most of Avalon Hill's war games, *Achtung Spitfire* comes with a manual which resembles a mini-textbook. This one is complete with historical background on military aviation and the factors in the air war from both sides. In addition, the CD-ROM contains an excellent airplane database of 25 planes from the war, including some of the most popular German and English aircraft — as well as the aircraft the French used for the 15 minutes they were in the war.

Overall, the game is simple and fun, though it wears thin pretty quickly. It's best suited to an evening with a good film like *Battle Of Britain* or a TV documentary on the RAF, when players might be the mood for trying their luck over the skies of England. The game isn't the best air simulation, but it's quick, easy to play and well executed. CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Lots of detail and great background.*

MISSES: *Short missions, better suited to a board game.*

THE LAST WORD: *The background is great, worthy of a documentary. But the game play is a little on the light side.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	80
Playability	78
Originality	77
Graphics	84
Sound & Music	81
Gameplay	80

OVERALL 80

Publisher: **ABC Interactive**
Developer: **OT Sports, L.L.C.**
Telephone: **(410) 771-8550**
Website: **www.abcinteractive.com**

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
• Windows 95
• Pentium 100
• 16 MB of RAM
• 2x CD-ROM w/win 95 driver
• Soundblaster 16 or compatible

ABC's Monday Night Football '98

by Jason Sabotin

FOR THOSE OF US, who like to be more involved with football than watching TV, but who don't have agents to work out multimillion dollar contracts, the computer often gives us a chance to coach or play like the big boys. One such entry for this fall is ABC Interactive's *Monday Night Football '98* (*MNF98*). This is ABC's second entry in this series. The first was known primarily for its extremely well-designed play design interface but pretty weak AI. ABC set out to improve on the first version by enhancing the AI and tightening up gameplay; but whether *MNF98* can compete with the perennial jocks of the football sim market — EA's *Madden* and Sierra's *Front Page Sports Football*, remains to be seen. In any solid computer football game, there are three main areas which make up a well-balanced product: the "general manager" area, coaching and actual gameplay. In these, *MNF98* rates a medium score, high score and low score, respectively.

For gamers fancying themselves armchair Ditkas, Switzers or Johnsons, *MNF98* delivers a perfect spiral. Not only does the game allow players to select plays from a huge playbook, but it allows players to design plays on the fly. Every stock play window has a button which allows it to be modified or completely redesigned to suit the whims of the next great Vince Lombardi. And allowing the player to be the next great coach is what *Monday Night Football '98* does best. If, however, being the next Joe Montana or Emmitt Smith is your goal, you may be in for a disappointment.

The coaching aspect of *MNF98*, as you may have guessed, excels. Before every game, players can set line-ups, assign positions and even alter football player ratings. The game sports the NFL players' license as well as the real NFL teams, so you might change Joe "9th round draft picks'" ratings to all 99s and make him the stud of the league or turn Steve Young into a weenie-armed quarterback with no running skills.

The final dash for the hotdog & beer stand.

Players can also customize coaching profiles, enabling the computer to select a particular group of plays to present during the game or to use when running in the background. Once the coin is tossed and the game begins, coaches can select from running, passing, special teams or trick plays. Each team has an easily modifiable playbook saved as a file within the game. Players can save custom plays in the team playbook as well. The majority of *MNF98's* Gameplay Manual is made up of instructions on calling plays as well as designing them.

Players have the ability to either actively coach games with real-time play "on the field," as it were, or to run games in the background. The on-the-field coaching involves calling plays and clicking the mouse to initiate actions (i.e., breaking huddle, snapping the ball, kicking, etc.) The coaching profiles set for each team will determine the style of play. *MNF98* uses a solid statistical model based on real plays that occur during the game to determine player and team statistics. I ran several games in the background, all of which featured realistic scores and player stats. There were no 98-67 shootouts, no 500 yard rushing games by a single tailback and no quarterbacks leading their team in tackles. There seems to be a lot of field goals (a

realistic model this year!) and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers really do win. Background games take two-to-three minutes to run, with another minute or so to save the statistics. An entire week's worth of games can run up to a half-hour. With so much of the game's manual catering to coaching and running/designing plays, it is easy to see where the game's strength and favoritism lie.

On the other hand, there isn't much of an ability to "general manage." Selecting the team management option only yields a list of the selected team's players, a list of "free agents" and a disabled list. Athletes can be interchanged from list to list. There is no drafting option and no realistic trading option, which is a real blow. Players can be "traded," however, by pressing the import players button on

Ohhh wee! Who's been eating chili?

the roster screen. Any player in the league or on specially designed all-star teams can be added to any other team. While this makes for easy team construction, it is not very true to life. Player-and-team statistics are kept for each game and for the season, and seem to model real players.

Lastly, what *MNF98* calls "action mode" is really a mediocre play system married to a decent game engine. One page out of the entire 106 page manual is devoted to how to run, throw, tackle, jump and perform other game actions. You have to hunt for it — it's listed under "joystick configuration." With certain actions, such as passing the football, you need a considerable amount of time to become proficient. There is no facility for throwing hard or arching a pass; nor is there one for kicking field goals from side to side. The game determines these things based on the player's ratings. This is great for stat hounds but not much fun for those who like to control the action. Although the actual game looks pretty good, controlling the fast action within it is a somewhat bland proposition.

Monday Night Football '98 is a definite example of a game that gets better with more weight and hardware under its belt. On a Pentium 133 with an average graphics card, the pre-game video was smooth and the game animation was fluid. On slower computers, I'd recommend lowering some graphical detail in the options screen. On a faster computer, the game runs briskly, background games finish quicker and the player/sprites run around with very little, if any, hesitation. The football players are 2D sprites... kind of reminiscent of later generation console football games. The stadiums are, as usual these days, rendered in glorious 3D, and are modeled after the real ones.

The player animations are nice, with painful-looking tackles, severe pushes out of bounds and — my favorite — players getting up slowly and gingerly when involved in a big hit. They aren't perfect, owing to their 2D nature, and often get the moonwalking effect when running — appearing to glide over the turf. Another programming quirk is that sometimes the players' jersey numbers will change, depending on their viewing angle. Speaking of points of view, there are 10 different camera angles. Most are a novelty at best, being either too far up or to the side to really play. It is fun, though, to set the camera on field view and try to accomplish a running play from the running back's

The final dash for the hotdog & beer stand

perspective. You really become aware of where that hole in the line is.

Sounds in *MNF98* are well done ... with perhaps a little too much grunting. The announcers are a strong point. The ABC Monday Night team of Al, Dan, and Frank offer surprisingly relevant commentary for each play. There are many sports games I feel like shutting down after a few minutes of play; with *MNF98*, however, my attention span increased by 30 minutes or so. Other than the occasional audio sync lag time, the speech was fluid and clear. They really hammer on a player if they miss an easy pass, fail to get open, miss a block, etc. ESPN and ABC favorite Chris Berman is present only for a few seconds at half time and doesn't say anything of value. In general, I'd call the graphics and sound slightly above average.

MNF98 offers multiplayer capability in addition to single player. Since gameplay is not as solid, it is more fun to play head-to-head as coaches. In this form, the game becomes almost a strategy wargame, as each coach tries to attack and counterattack with his or her playbook. ABC is very high on the multiplayer aspect of the game, devoting nearly half of the game manual to this end.

As absolutely solid as the play calling and design model is, the rest of the game kind of fades around it. There are a lot of little inconsistencies present — for instance, the announcers will call yardage that the scoreboard does not. The announcers call the Oilers by their new Tennessee name, but the scoreboard refers to them as the Houston Oilers. Quarterbacks tend to throw the ball out of bounds a lot, instead of getting incomplete passes. There is no documented way to substitute players during a game. And, as a perfect

example that the creators of *Monday Night Football '98* were far more interested in the coaching aspect than the actual gameplay/presentation, there are no penalty flags. Oh, there are penalties, but only in the form of a little pop-up window informing you of the penalty. At least put a little flag on it, or make it yellow or something. It just takes away from the realism aspect.

Still, *Monday Night Football '98* is entertaining. Once I began to understand the play calling and figured out how to move my players, the game became interesting to play, although really only from the coaching standpoint. For one play session, I took the game to a friend's house and played it on his computer to test a different system configuration. While I played, he watched from a chair behind me, as if it were a game on television. He had as much fun as I did and, depending on how you look at it, it really highlights the strengths and weaknesses of this football game. It's fun to tell it what to do and let it run, but maybe not quite as much fun to do it yourself. █

THE SIMPSONS
VIRTUAL SPRINGFIELD   *by Gerald Williams*

WHAT LOOKS LIKE A WINNER, at first gander, gradually disappoints, owing for the most part to its frustrating limitations and to the high expectations its presentation elicits. Hats off, though, to the come-hither packaging. Who could — Simpsonsophile or no — resist its "step right up" ballyhoo, its heavy suggestion that you're going to be in for a rare ol' time? Forget it. The packaging is a expertly calculated tease. Playing the game is very much like being stuck in one of the many small towns that make up the backbone of our nation, as my fifth-grade teacher used to declare. Nothing much happens... and missing is the sting of that acerbic Simpson wit which those of us who don't mind laughing at themselves have come to enjoy. Instead, the player has to contend with the faux-goofy blah blah of Springfield's depressed denizens, which runs the gamut from kinda cute to cornball. Actually, it is the loony-but-lucid barbed humor that has elevated the TV Simpsons show from being just a mean study of loserdom, small-town style. Too bad it wasn't put to good use here.

Virtual Springfield is a one-shot game. Nothing you'd return to again and again unless you've got a nostalgia thing for the Springfields of our land (no offense). The gags, once they've coaxed a mild chuckle from the player, are unlikely to register a similar response the second time around. It's the endless driving that ends up nowhere, really, that gets to you, after a while. The 3D exploration of Springfield wears thin when you've turned the same corner more than once. This street, that street — they're all the same, and nary a soul in sight ... except for a sprinkling of Simpsons oddballs who, after several cross-street encounters, start rattling off the same lines again the next time they cross your path. And don't bother to follow them around the corner, because they disappear once they've turned. (so much for what's virtual in Springfield). The largest grouping of individuals in this game can be found at Moe's Tavern or in the

cemetery (and the majority of them, dead — though active) Other than that, it's a passerby here, a passerby there — on what seem to be rare occasions. So most of the time, it's just you — the player/driver — and the barren pavement. And you can't turn down any street you please or stop at any building you want, which adds to the frustration and ennui. Not a chance of finding out what goes on behind the walls of the She-She Motel, for instance.

When, as you meander, your roving cursor halts on a piece of real estate and turns into a pointing hand, you're grateful. Buildings you can explore include the schoolhouse, the nuclear power plant, Moe's Tavern, and the Aztec Theatre. Admittedly, some of the situations encountered within these establishments are funny — clever, even. It makes you wish there were more of this — more humorous stops along the way. You may also wish, as I did, that you could visit these stations of comic relief whenever you chose to.

To make up, perhaps, for what it lacks, *Virtual Springfield* offers extras aplenty — collector cards, Noiseland Arcade games, mini games, such as the Flanders' Bar Game, Donut Toss, Apoom., and interactive Website possibilities. Some of these detours — especially those that are playfully anarchic — are fun, even if they are of a diversionary nature.

Distinctly in the game's favor is its overall concept and design, which give the game a winning, albeit superficial wraparound aura — all brash and mellow at the same time. The banana-hued characters ... the slightly lopsided sets and their narcotizing pastels ...the curved-angle architecture ...they still pay off on a subliminal level. They comfort — provide a well-oiled inducement to just lay back and prepare to enjoy. And then, theoretically,

Hey man, get out of my room!

Virtual Springfield couldn't help but be thought of as potentially pleasing, owing to the hold *The Simpsons* continues to have on the American psyche and funny-bone (this may be lessening — a petering-out patina has tinged recent TV efforts to keep the ball rolling).

The game's developers and producers have banked largely on America's fond memories of *The Simpsons* as a guarantee for sales — they've not done much to enhance or recharge that which was established at least decade ago — and instead have chosen to coast along on the formulaic. Too bad. My predictions? 1.) *Virtual Springfield* will sell well. 2.) There's unlikely to be a Virtual Springfield II ☐☐☐

OVERVIEW

HITS: *It rings a bell — customer response is bound to be Pavlovian*

MISSES: *Great chance for a new lease on life overlooked. Limited in its overall appeal except to yonger age groups.*

LAST WORD: *No matter what I say, it's going to sell because he's the Bart man!*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	60
Playability	75
Originality	50
Graphics	84
Music and Sound	40
Gameplay	50

OVERALL 60

REVIEW

You Don't Know Jack, Vol. 3

By Allen Rausch

I'VE SAID IT before, and I'll probably say it again, "Don't ever judge computer games by the same criteria you use when deciding whether or not to see a movie." Movie sequels usually get worse as the franchise moves on: computer games, on the other hand, usually get better— even if, as in the case of *You Don't Know Jack, Vol. 3*, getting better means staying exactly the same.

For those people who have never played any *You Don't Know Jack* games, the premise is fairly simple. It's a mock game show in which a smart-aleck host asks bizarre questions for which your specific trivia knowledge isn't as important as your ability to follow the twisted logic of the questions themselves. For example, a typical *YDKJ* category is something like "Now I've got peanut butter & Silly Putty in my hair" in which the question is: "Silly Putty is to the Sunday comics as...." The answer (of course) is D: "Jesus Christ is to the Shroud of Turin."

As always, the game's strongest point is the quality of its writing and voice-over work. Since the game's graphics are simple (though very effective), the bulk of the game's interest rests on the audio components. As with all previous versions, *YDKJ3* provides a textbook example of the way that voice actors should be cast. In particular, the game's host, Tom Gottlieb, deserves credit for holding the whole package together. The host segments as a whole seem more energetic than the somewhat lackluster deliveries in *You Don't Know Jack, Vol. 2*.

The writing, too, is much sharper than in *YDKJ2*. Berkeley seems to be aware that they went to the fart-joke well once too often in the past, for they have eased off on the toilet humor in this version. Not that the game has been cleaned up by any means; double entendres still abound, and many of the question subjects are definitely not for minors. These gags, however, are more clever than gratuitous; they don't grate on the listener's sensibilities the way the last batch did.

One undernoted element of the *Jack* series, by the way, has always been the phony commercials that play over the game's credits. True to form, these commercials are universally hilarious, especially the *Xena: Warrior Princess* parodies. In two minutes, *YDKJ* is able to produce more laughs than the last five years of *Saturday Night Live*. I can't believe that no television producer has snapped up the rights to turn this game into a TV show.

Besides the now standard multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and the utterly despised gibberish questions, a few new question categories spice up this version of *YDKJ*. There are now "Impossible Questions" which are worth $20,000; these challenge players to do things like calculate the number of phone booths in New York City or the number of seconds in one month (2,592,000 for 30-day months, by the way). There are also "3-on-3" questions where players race to guess the relationship between three words, and "Super Audio Questions" which test players' abilities to recognize pieces of popular music from segments played *very* badly.

You Don't Know Jack, Vol. 3 is inherently a party game, one truly designed for three players at the same PC. Although some people may question the decision to put no multiplayer or Internet capabilities in, those things would be wasted in the commercial versions of *YDKJ*. Single players looking for an Internet experience would be better served playing the free online version of the game at **www.bezerk.com**. If you're playing the commercial version of the game, you should have a few friends over to share the social experience.

For those gamers looking to introduce non-gamers or non-computer users to the fun of gaming as a hobby, *YDKJ* serves as a perfect introduction. It's friendly, simple, non-threatening and, with questions of varying difficulties on a broad range of topics, accessible to a wide group of ages and experience levels. There's an old marketing cliché (way overused but perfectly applicable) to *You Don't Know Jack, Vol. 3* — it really is "fun for the whole family!" **CGE**

Pssssssst — Try number three.

OVERVIEW

HITS: *Hilarious questions, amusing banter. Good range of questions.*

MISSES: *At only 800 questions, you'll start seeing repeats very fast.*

LAST WORD:
If you loved 'em before, get this one too. If this is your first Jack, then it's a good place to start.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	87
Playability	85
Originality	75
Graphics	80
Sound & Music	90
Gameplay	90

OVERALL 85

3D Atlas '98

By Gerald Williams

AN INDISPENS-ABLE research tool for anyone's home library, Creative Wonders' *3D Atlas 98* packages the visual wonders, hard facts, and cultural and natural riches of Planet Earth in a way that is to-the-point, educational and fun. You've never been able to experience the world in this way before. Subjects that are usually boring in the classroom (geography, world history, world politics, economics, geology, art) come to life with such brilliance and impact in *3D Atlas 98* that they're certain to remain lodged in the memory long after the user has switched off his/her PC.

Imagine zooming in on Paris, from planet view to global region to country to city, and ending up with a detailed street map of that fascinating and legendary metropolis. You can't get much closer than that. *3D Atlas 98* presents at least 200 such maps for your exploration — plus enhancing and atmospheric visuals of local color, street scenes and typical landscapes. These lend an almost undeniable feeling of presence to your exploration— the impression that you're actually there.

This up-to-date, complete information resource also provides narrated videos which explore topics such as pollution, population growth and other environmental issues. You'll feel reassured knowing that the World Resources Institute, an indisputable authority on global issues, participated in this project, supplying this two-CD atlas with thousands of display and print statistics, including charts which can be used in school reports or business presentations.

3D Atlas 98's 3D virtual fly-throughs are a sight to behold. You'll feel airborne as you are introduced to soaring eagle-eye views of mountains, wilderness and deserts. The world never seemed so full of wonder and mystery before. You'll be truly awed, humbled and more appreciative of

this whirling orb we call Earth when you view it from these dizzying and fantastic heights.

For fun (and additional learning), *3D Atlas 98* has a quiz game. The reward for correct answers is mileage so that you can complete a virtual trip around the world. The questions are thrown out at random to keep you on your toes. It's here that you can put your knowledge to work and learn things you never knew about the world.

3D Atlas 98 is a cinch to use. Basically, it has three components: the physical world (the Earth's terrain from under and above the sea), the environmental world (world view from space) and the political world (national boundaries). There are 98 easy-to-use controls in *3D Atlas 98*, including Info Button, Zoom In, Zoom Out, Superplay and World Overview.

An important plus to this two-CD atlas is its Website possibilities, which allows you to make additional world journeys. You'll be delighted by the many downloadables you can access through the Internet connection — printable maps, daily news and simulations, to name a few. Each Online Menu has five destinations: Links, Downloadables, Swap Shop, 3D Atlas Home and Creative Wonders Home. All together, this gives you seemingly limitless possibilities.

3D Atlas 98's second CD supplies road maps for the entire US, which you may customize prior to making trips. In addition, with 10 levels of zoomable detail, you're able to find any location in the country quickly and explore it to the nth degree.

My only complaint about this bonanza of a product? It's slight on audio. There are so many opportunities in the atlas for sound that aren't taken advantage of

Tokyo, the world's largest city, as seen from space shuttle.

here. The visual content would be all the more outstanding if it were supplemented by national anthems, street noises, folk music, atmospheric sounds of nature or of the sea....

3D Atlas 98 is a learning tool that can not only bring the world closer to you while providing new ways to assess its magnitude as well as its wonders, but can also teach us how to make the world a better place in which to live. That students will be able to excel thanks to the guidance and help this atlas is able to provide goes without saying. In the coming years, there are sure to be atlases which are more ingenious, more dazzling...but for now, for *3D Atlas 98* — wow! CGE

OVERVIEW

HITS: *The world never looked so good. The visuals, still and moving, are knock-outs. The quiz game's a definite plus.*

MISSES: *No sound where there should be sound. What a missed opportunity.*

LAST WORD: *A commendable learning tool, especially for students.*

Ratings	
Dollar Value	11
Playability	15
Originality	18
Graphics	38
Sound & Music	8
Physical Components	5

OVERALL 95

h a r d w a r e

List Price:	$129.95
Developer:	CH Products
Telephone:	(619) 598-2518
Website:	www.chproducts.com

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
• Game Port
• DOS
• Windows 95 for speed keys

Jane's Combat Stick   *by Scott Wolf*

IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO that joystick support in PC games was little more than an afterthought. Indeed, the first analog joysticks were very businesslike affairs — small, two-button devices that fit easily in the palm of one hand. But over the years, as action games grew more expansive and versatile, and racing and flight simulations achieved a level of realism and sophistication worthy of multimillion dollar military trainers, the need for peripherals capable of providing commensurate control saw dozens of manufacturers, here and abroad, suddenly scrambling for a piece of the lucrative joystick market.

When the dust settled after the initial-release stampede, two companies emerged as clear leaders in technology, production and design — ThrustMaster and CH Products. While ThrustMaster concentrated on hardcore authentic military designs and a somewhat radical approach to programming, CH settled into a more relaxed melding of civilian, military and outright gaming aesthetics.

Jane's Combat Stick, the latest in CH's line of sticks modeled after the unit found in the US Air Force's F-16 Fighting Falcon, represents an interesting marketing strategy — native support for Electronic Arts' line of "Jane's Combat Simulations" — and a somewhat confusing compromise between their extant Combat Stick and the top-of-the-line (not counting the force-feedback Force FX) F-16 FighterStick. Like every one of CH's products, Jane's Combat Stick is sturdy, reliable and comfortable to use. The somewhat misleading advertisement of features that only work in conjunction with their Pro Throttle might cause consternation in some potential customers, however.

Physically, JCS looks like a regular Combat Stick mounted on the wider, deeper base of a FighterStick and sporting a switch for Standard and Pro Throttle modes. Its 14 functions (two 4-way switches, five push buttons, trigger and rotary throttle wheel) are nonprogrammable without special software or their costly Pro Throttle ($189.95 list), and its highly touted simultaneous button presses (in "Discrete" mode like the Fighter-Stick) also require the Pro Throttle to work optimally. In Standard (or "Chorded") mode, it behaves like an ordinary Combat Stick or CH FlightStick Pro.

If you're planning to use JCS and Pro Throttle in Windows 95 you'll definitely want to download the latest version of Speed Keys from CH's Website. Without it, you'll have to restart your machine in DOS mode to use the setup and programming software that comes with the products.

So what's the point, you ask? Well, if you don't already own a decent joystick, JCS is more than adequate for any application you have in mind. If you don't own a separate throttle, the throttle wheel on the base is a convenient substitute. If you own any of Jane's Combat Simulations (*Advanced Tactical Fighters*, *US Navy Fighters '97* or *AH-64D Longbow*), you'll have built-in support for many of the keyboard commands, even if they're not mapped by default to your liking. If you don't already own a copy of *ATF*, it's included — although without the *NATO Fighters* add-on or native Win95 support — on the Installation CD-ROM. Alas, all documentation, with the exception of a couple of Quick Start pamphlets, is provided in .pdf format for viewing with Adobe's Acrobat Reader (also included).

For the flight-sim neophyte, or for any gamer ready to break free from total keyboard control, the Jane's Combat Stick package is a pretty sweet deal. Unless you're on a really tight budget, the improved electronics and sturdier base, not to mention the inclusion of *ATF*, make it an easy choice over the standard Combat Stick. Of course, for the serious simmer, the F-16 FighterStick (with Pro Throttle and Pro Pedals) is still the way to go. CGE

With the addition of Speed Keys (available at CH's website), programming stick and throttle in Windows 95 is easier than ever.

OVERVIEW

HITS: A dependable and versatile joystick, packaged with an outstanding game.

MISSES: Requires the CH Pro Throttle to reach its full potential.

THE LAST WORD: Both CH and Jane's are names you can trust when it comes to all things in gaming.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	82
Installation	83
Tech Support	85
Documentation	80
Product Use	80

OVERALL 83

sports

SODA Off-Road Racing   *by Grant Sanborn*

AS HANK WILLIAMS JR. "SundAY! SunDAY! SUNDAY (and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday) haul your greasy overalls to the most radical off-road tracks in the world to ride the bumpy trails with *SODA Off-Road Racing* from Sierra and Papyrus and featuring the Software Allies design team."

With an emphasis on the realities of off-road reality over arcade bump and grind-fests, *SODA* brings you the grit and grime of this special form of high-octane racing in a graphics-light but features-heavy version ideal for almost any driving enthusiast.

Perusing the pictures accompanying this review you'll notice immediately that the graphics are closer to old-school *Battlezone* than what you've come to expect from the super-rez infatuated games of recent memory. However, don't let these primitive stick figures fool you — this is a game that has taken realism in racing to heart and

Yehaaar, here we go.

chassis. The physics modeling is par excellence!

Whether racing in a single race format or through a tournament challenge, *SODA* offers a variety of features that let you tweak and race and race and tweak some

So its a first on the left, stop at the lights then right.

more. Choosing from three vehicles (and five paint jobs) you can put yourself in the cab of either an up to 150 horse-power 2-wheel buggy, a 2-wheel truck that packs up to a 800 horsepower punch or a 4 x 4 behemoth that can tear up the tracks with its 800 horses under the hood. Of course, this game was designed well enough to take into account that a big engine means more spin-outs and damage possibilities, that you'll need a deft handling touch and the fact that tire tread that gets torn up faster than Chris Farley wolfs down burgers.

The vehicles themselves can be customized by fine-tuning three separate options, from its power to its suspension to its gearing. In the power category, you can reduce horsepower capabilities or up the ante for maximum gas. You can also activate the g-force analyzer, choose from automatic or manual transmissions and pick your depth of tread for sticky or slippery traction. The suspension mode gives mechanically inclined drivers a variety of options as well, with spring, shock, front camber and weight distribution settings that range from the conservative to the downright Carmageddon-ish. Finally, for those gearheads who really want to get under the hood, *SODA* lets you fiddle with
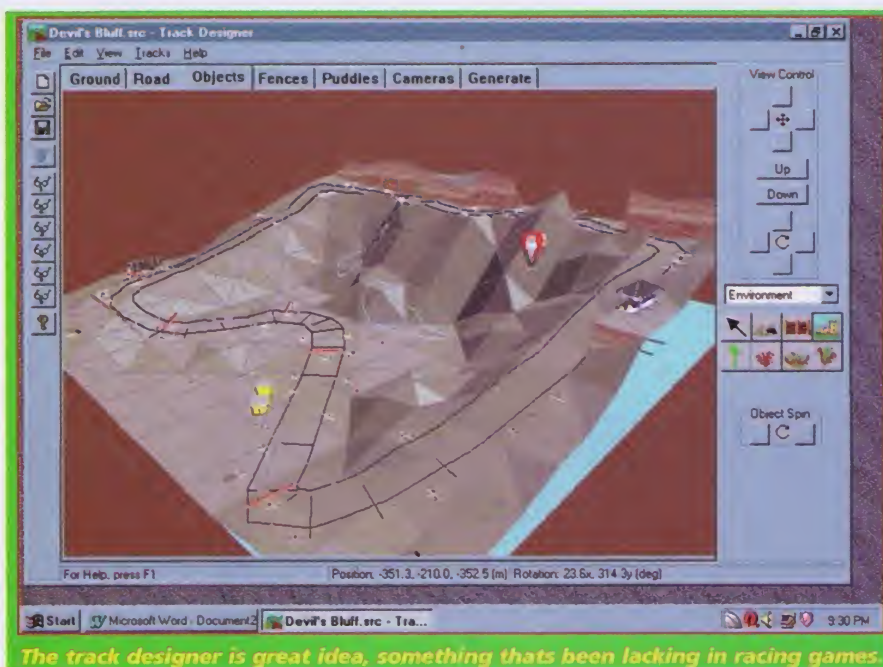
The track designer is great idea, something thats been lacking in racing games.

the gearing, offering you steering lock options and gear shifting possibilities that determine at what mph your truck will shift into overdrive.

There are four tracks represented in three distinct environments (for a total of twelve tracks) that allow you to test your steering touch and leadfoot prowess. These tracks pit you against five other computer racers who are very good at streaking around the tracks. Coming in first and even finishing these races is no simple task. In fact, given the advanced damage modeling included in SODA ensures that you better treat these vehicles with respect or you'll find yourself trying to navigate the Cliffs of Death with a missing back tire or a smoking engine. The

game supports steering wheels, joysticks, gamepads and keyboard play (even though I almost tossed my T-@ through the window trying to get it to work).

Taking all of the previous comments into account, the centerpiece and most impressive element of SODA isn't actually the racing at all but the race track designer. Opening mud-filled avenues that spread infinitely with the scope of your imagination, the SODA track designer gives you a variety of options, possibilities and death-defying creative options. My first creation (dubbed "HELL") was a brutal course that consisted of tortuous uphill climbs, gut-busting drops into shallow puddles and a religious section of the course that brought more than eight

churches within easy reach of any truck.

Several features further strengthen the track designing function. For instance, after generating the ultimate track, the track is brought to the regular racing board where the computer "teaches" racers to navigate its particular axle-bending twists, turns and climbs. Of course, when designing my version of HELL, I tried pushing the AI to its limit and ended up constructing a course that was impossible for the computer racers to learn. So you'll always need to keep this in mind when constructing tracks.

SODA is designed with the network and the WWW in mind, with multiplayer capabilities including six player IPX-LAN and TCP-IP options. There is also two-player modem availability and direct serial connections. The beauty of these features come into play when you post your own tracks to the Web, race on other peoples tracks or download new tracks from the Web. The memory these tracks take up is not really small, but they're not enough to fill your drives, either.

As you can tell, racing the SODA trucks is only part of the fun and occupy a lot less of your mindshare. The graphics may not be up to par because of the sacrifice for the track designer, but for racing enthusiasts, this should not disappoint at all — especially if you dive into the track designer. Racing actually becomes secondary — and isn't that what can really make a racing title stand out? So if you want to race and race some more — opt for one of the more traditional racing titles. If you're interested in authentic off-road racing, SODA should not disappoint you. And if you feel like taking your imagination and putting it to the design test, hop into the big seat, double clutch your buggy and buy SODA Off-Road Racing from Sierra. CGE

Damm, I've been caught speeding again

OVERVIEW

HITS: Play God by creating your own axle-bending fantasy tracks – complete with churches

MISSES: The graphics will remind you of the good old days of Missile Command

LAST WORD: Besides the multiple features available to tweak-happy gearheads, the ability to create and post your own tracks to the Web should push the envelope in future racing games.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	85
Playability	95
Originality	65
Graphics	75
Sound & Music	90
Gameplay	85

OVERALL 83

REVIEW

PICTIONARY & BOGGLE *by Shane Mooney*

NOT TOO LONG AGO, I attempted to impress my non-computing friend with my collection of the latest and greatest computer games. After blowing his mind with the graphic powerhouses that are *Quake* and *Hexen II*, I moved over to the real time favorites *Dark Reign* and *Red Alert*, rounding out the presentation with *Master Of Orion II*. After having figured that I'd blown him away sufficiently, I looked over for his reaction only to hear him say, "That's great. What can we play together?" It was then that I realized that, unless all your friends have modem-equipped computers, 99% of the games out there are designed to be played by one person at one machine, with scant few to fill a large void of two-player games.

Hasbro Interactive, the gaming division of the board game giant, is slowly but surely filling that rather huge niche with their cardboard conversions and, while their latest pen-and-paper ports lack the state-of-the-art appeal of today's best-sellers, *Pictionary* and *Boggle* do what they do very well.

The advantage of a game like *Pictionary* is that everyone has no doubt played some version of it in the non-cyber world, so the learning curve on this game is straighter than a Nevada highway. Allowing up to three players at one keyboard, *Pictionary* delivers six different games for one to three players or teams. Players go head-to-head with the PC in "computer draw," as they try to identify the computer's sketches before time runs out. In "rapid reveal," a full-color picture is slowly uncovered as players race to name it. "artist's block" features a small cube which quickly moves over a hidden, full-color picture. Players try to beat the clock as well as their opponent to identify the image

Pictionary is the most fun playing with a group of friends on the computer.

first. In "quick link," the computer is drawing once again, but this time the last word of each answer is the first word in the next. Hand-eye coordination is put to the test in "picker tape," in which a row of full-color pictures moves to the right and phrases to the left. Finally, in the classic "you-draw," players take mouse in hand to test their artistic abilities by drawing sketches other teams must identify.

Though not as universally popular as it's more artistic sibling, *Boggle* is sure to appeal the word-loving, *Scrabble*-playing crowd. In *Classic Boggle*, modeled after the original, players race against the clock to find words in the grid of jumbled three-dimensional letters. In Breakaway *Boggle*, words are hidden in a multidimensional letter cube; once letters have been selected to form words they disappear from the screen.

Two players compete head-to-head in a war for words in *Battle Boggle* and in In Your Face Boggle, layers of letters have to be cleared by forming words.

Finally, *Space Boggle* challenges players to create words as letters zoom forward in an alphabet asteroid field.

Again, these games could hardly be called cutting edge and, unlike most popular games on the market, are at their worst in solitaire mode. But if you're having friends over, and you've grown tired of the *You Don't Know Jack* series, *Pictionary* and *Boggle* make great additions to your list of party games.

OVERVIEW

HITS: Enjoyable party games for those looking for light entertainment.

MISSES: Not nearly as much fun when you play them solo.

THE LAST WORD: These games fill that "what can we play together" void that too many game companies overlook.

Ratings	
Dollar Value	89
Playability	85
Originality	80
Graphics	85
Sound & Music	80
Gameplay	80

OVERALL 83

The Expert Witness

BY SELBY BATEMAN

STOP THE HAND-WRINGING!

Could we just stop all the hand-wringing complaints about clones?

If you care about computer games and keep up with them (as best anyone can!), you know two things: First, there are always too many clones chasing last year's best sellers. The same rule applies to motion pictures, television, novels, athletic shoes, dishwashers, and presidential candidates. Success always breeds imitation.

Second, most innovations in gaming come by way of incremental adaptations of previously existing works or features within those works. In other words, in any creative commercial endeavor, we have to understand that there will be a herd of imitators—only a few of them will represent breakthroughs of some sort.

Remember the dictum attributed to the late science fiction writer Fred Pohl when someone said to him that 80 percent of science fiction was crap. "Well," he said, "80 percent of everything is crap!" It's the 20 percent that keeps us going, that keeps us excited about where we've come from in computer gaming and where we're going.

Instead of throwing up our hands predictably every year about clones, those who truly love and care about computer gaming need to bear down and help the developers and publishers understand where we want to go, what we want to see, and, yes, what we're tired of seeing. But we need to do it specifically, not as a general indictment of cloning ad nauseam.

It's very hard to dig deep into a good game and pull out the specific elements that make the game either a step forward, a step in place, or a step backward. But, once you start, it gets easier and helps you understand the dynamics of gaming. Queuing of multiple orders in a real-time strategy game? Gotta have it now. Capability to group and maneuver multiple units by key commands? Gotta be there. The same rule applies to other conventions that evolve in every game genre.

In a recent editorial for a magazine aimed at computer game developers, legendary game designer Chris Crawford wrote, in part, that no one seems to understand that today's leading technology is "tomorrow's silly fad. He then notes that

his classic game, Eastern Front, was praised in 1981 for its "smooth scrolling." But, he adds, "it's laughable by current standards." Well, of course it is. But that's not the point. The point is that the scrolling feature in that game opened the eyes of many game programmers and designers who hadn't thought about it before. It was a good incremental step forward, and it was copied and improved from that day on.

Another prime example also involves Chris Crawford. When he wrote about player/missile graphics on the Atari 800 computer in an early edition of COMPUTE! magazine, circa 1980, even Atari hadn't understood what its 8-bit computer could do. It changed the way programmers and designers thought about their world. Well, player/missile graphics on a 6502-chip computer may be a "laughable" concept by today's standards—but it moved us forward. And it was copied and cloned and improved on down to today.

When Brett Sperry and his team at Westwood Studios saw what they had put together in Dune II, they realized they were on to something and moved forward to Command & Conquer. When talented game designer Chris Taylor got his first glimpse of C&C at the Electronic Entertainment Expo a couple of years ago, he wanted to take it to another level. He showed his 3D terrain model to Ron Gilbert, one of the most creative game designers in the industry, and Ron realized Chris was on to a significant step forward. If you talk to either Ron or Chris about their game, Total Annihilation, they will unabashedly tell you that they love C&C, but wanted to go further. And so it goes.

The point here is that this process is the norm in our industry. That norm is not, in and of itself, bad. In fact, you can have fun tracking the path of development from one game to another to another to another. Try it. For example, start with Roberta Williams' Mystery House and make a genealogy tree of graphic adventures going forward. Or, start with Marc Blank's ZORK text adventure. (You can go backward and forward with that one.) Try starting with SSI's Sink the Bismarck or Microprose's Hellcat Ace or Electronic Arts' Bill Budge's Pinball Construction Set. The list is fascinating.

What's even more fun, but exponentially harder, is to build those trees and then add a list of the also-rans and dogs that didn't cut it with gamers.

I get as tired as anyone of seeing half-baked ideas that are shoved out the door because a publisher has to make its quarterly revenue numbers. But I would argue that it's from within the confusing, unmanageable, often frustrating, avalanche of incrementally different titles that most of our long-term innovations emerge.

Send in the clones! 🎮

The Gate Keeper

BY ANDY BACKER

WAY BACK WHEN

Back in the second issue of CGE I wrote about the difficulties I had playing multiplayer *Diablo*. The story began something like this:

I created a level one rogue and logged on to *battle.net* hoping to find some kind soul to play *Diablo* with me. I glanced through the on-going messages from players on the opening screen. They all wanted higher level characters than me to join their parties—no one wanted a newbie. Therefore, I chose a level one warrior named "Killer" who was traveling alone and joined his game, hoping he wouldn't object.

I met him in the town square and asked, "Can I join you?"

He said, "Sure," and after we chatted for a bit added, "You want to go kill something? Follow me." I followed him into the dungeon below the church. After we walked down the steps I looked around for some monsters to kill while he walked up to my rogue, sword raised high, and hit me! Whack! I watched in silence as Killer (true to his name) killed me. I was too shocked to respond. The screen turned blood red as Killer spoke his final words: "Now you die!"

THE REST OF THE STORY

I got several complimentary messages about the column including the following one from Chris M. Koschik, "Everything you wrote was true and right on the nose! We both, I guess, had problems starting out multiplayer Diablo. By the way, I hunted down Killer. He's a level twenty-three now, but my character is a level thirty-six so I killed him in your name! Revenge is so sweet, and justice has been served!" Chris wrote back after I thanked him for his message, "I met Killer again the other day. He's been killed and resurrected now more times than he can count."

As Paul Harvey would say—and that's the rest of the story. Thanks, Chris!

APPRECIATE YOUR JOB

"What a great job you have," Chris added, "to be able to play games and then give your opinions about them! Appreciate it. I would kill Killer a thousand times over just to write articles in a video game magazine!" I do appreciate my job, Chris, it

is a heady experience to share my opinions with readers, but before I started writing reviews I was quite happy sharing my opinions with just a few close friends.

I ran across a message thread on the Internet recently, in which two gamers were sharing their opinions. One wrote, "The best part about playing games is when, once in a while, you discover something interesting, tell another gamer friend about it, and it's something he didn't know. That gives you a real feeling of accomplishment."

The other replied, "Yeah... that happens to me occasionally—it does feel good. I got so good at playing the rogue in *Diablo* that lots of people came to me for help. Very satisfying."

One doesn't have to write for a video-game magazine to be fulfilled as a gamer.

'TIS A PUZZLEMENT

As satisfying as it is to help other gamers by sharing your opinions, the down side is that someone may disagree. When you go out on a limb, it might be sawed off. Just because you like a particular game, doesn't mean that everyone will. If you find a game too difficult, someone else will say it's too easy. Such is the case with *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror*. I loved it, and wrote a review this month about it. I thought the game's puzzles were just right—neither too hard nor too easy.

Someone on the Internet, however, asked other gamers recently if they didn't find the puzzles in *The Smoking Mirror* too easy.

'Tis a puzzlement, what level of gamer to write for. I stand by my opinions, however, and wager that most gamers will appreciate an adventure game in which they can solve puzzles without a walkthrough.

ULTIMA ONLINE

Sit down, *Diablo*, there's a new multiplayer CRPG in town. *Ultima Online* is signing up Ultima fans by the thousands. There's a monthly fee and you have to purchase the software, but that hasn't deterred the faithful.

This version of *Ultima* allows thousands of people to travel the

George gets the stone in The Smoking Mirror.

TOP TO BOTTOM:
- *Sit down, Diablo, Ultima Online is the new multiplayer CRPG in town.*
- *Halls of the Dead is not quite back from the dead.*
- *The characters may not be easy to identify with (when's the last time you rode a bird)?*

lands at once, solving quests, fighting evil (or good), or just meeting at the local pub for a drink. You can customize your character's hair color and style as well as clothing, buy a house, hire a guard, train a pet, start a business, or launch a full-fledged campaign against Lord British himself to take over the world.

The scuttlebutt so far is that the game is fun, but that it takes too long to get things done. On some sessions you'll just spin your wheels. The best way of making a living is debatable. Some prefer to knit skullcaps, although scavenging caves is preferred by others. There doesn't seem to be any great way of getting rich quick, however. Novices beware. There are player-killers online.

FINAL FANTASY VII

Ultima Online may be the new king of the multiplayer CRPGs, while *Fallout* and *Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny* duke it out for the PC CRPG championship, but the PlayStation version of *Final Fantasy VII* is now the best-selling game of 1997. Sales exceeded 500,000 units within the first three weeks of its American debut (September 7, 1997).

There will be PC versions of *Final Fantasy VII* as well as *Final Fantasy V* and *Final Fantasy VI* released sometime in the first quarter of 1998. *Final Fantasy VIII* may be released in Japan, but only for the PlayStation, sometime during the fourth quarter of 1998.

The story is that the universe is fundamentally composed of life energy that cannot be created or destroyed, merely transferred. An evil power company called Shinra, Inc. has found a way to mine this life energy and use it to control the universe. Fortunately, a resistance organization known as AVALANCHE vows to put an end to Shinra's power play. The game's primary hero is Cloud, an ex-soldier of Shinra, who teams up with AVALANCHE and, along the way, encounters some very mysterious and powerful allies who help him fight against the deadly creatures Shinra creates to protect its empire.

I've just begun playing the game but have already discovered that it has a great deal of action but also plenty of character interaction, story, puzzles and other role-playing features. It's not easy to learn how to play. Besides having to adjust to a gamepad, I've been introduced to a complicated magic system, as well as a multitude of control commands. The characters are more like animated cartoons and may be difficult for some to identify with. Cloud wields a magic Bushido blade that he uses in combat; even against villains toting machine-guns–how realistic is that?

THE BEST CRPG STILL NOT RELEASED

Faery Tale Adventure II is still not quite back from the dead. Ignite, the game's manufacturer, was overhauled in July. CEO David Hirschhorn said that it was a troubled company and that he "intends to rebuild it from the bottom up." There were massive changes in personnel, and several projects were put on hold including *Faery Tale Adventure: Halls of the Dead*. A number of copies had been released for review, but game magazines were asked not to publish them. At least one online magazine, however, had already published a review.

Whether or not the game will released at some future date is still not known. Ignite hasn't answered my phone calls and they no longer have a Website. I wasn't able to contact the game's developer, The Dreamers Guild, either, and their Web-site hasn't been updated.

The game is much bigger and better than the disappointing PC version released over eight years ago. It is even more beautiful than the amazing Amiga version that preceded it (many fans still consider the Amiga version to be one of the best CRPGs ever). The story still involves the same three heroic brothers. In *Faery Tale*, however, the brothers ventured forth only one at a time (two of the brothers were backups in case one of the first ones died). *Halls of the Dead* is a multi-party game with all three brothers walking (or running) across SVGA screens. It's a shame the game hasn't already been released so PC players can see for themselves why Amiga *Faery Tale* fans were so rabid.

AGE OF EMPIRES

Vying for Game Of The Year honors is Microsoft's new strategy game (with plenty of role-playing elements), *Age of Empires*, which absolutely knocked my socks off. Its designers have taken the best parts of *Civilization*, *Warcraft* and *Command & Conquer* and concocted a jaw-dropping, technical and graphic masterpiece. It's chock full of terrific features, and a real treat. ▨

Wolf Bites Back

BY SCOTT WOLF

SECRET IDENTITY

WARRIOR...IS...ABOUT...TO...DIE...
I had a heart attack last week. No, not the kind you get when Lara Croft walks into frame at an unexpectedly awe-inspiring angle. The kind you get when cigarettes, junk food and hours of computer-driven physical inactivity launch a pre-emptive strike on your coronary arteries and try to kill you. Or, in this case, me.

Last Friday I began preparing my wolf pen (I raise wolves) for the coming winter -- filling in holes and laying down fresh wood chips -- when Senor Corazon suddenly refused to deliver the supply of Hemo the Magnificent, necessary for the task at hand.

In complete denial, I ignored the symptoms all weekend, even after pain started spreading down my left arm. I actually went to bed Sunday night figuring that everything would be all right in the morning. I could have died in my sleep at that point and quite frankly I'm amazed that I didn't.

I awoke at 5:30 a.m. with the pain still very much in evidence and got dressed, went into the living room and picked up the phone to dial 911. I put it back down. What if this wasn't really a heart attack? How embarrassing to have the emergency vehicles arrive with lights flashing and sirens wailing, while bathrobe-clad busybodies gathered on their front lawns wondering what I was being arrested for this time -- only to discover that it was a Burrito Supreme having a laugh at my expense.

Reason returned briefly and I picked up the receiver again, put it back down, picked it back up and put it back down again. I decided to rest for a moment and actually drifted off to sleep for twenty minutes or so. Feeling a little better, and believing that the crisis had passed, I crawled back in bed and went to sleep.

I woke up again around 10 a.m. to renewed pain and put in a call to my doctor. "Get to an Emergency Room right now!" she said. And I did. After several EKGs and much drawing of blood it was determined that I had indeed suffered a mild heart attack. An angiogram was scheduled for the following day and I resigned myself to spending the night in the damned hospital.

Pain and discomfort aside, angiograms are pretty cool. They give you five milligrams of Valium to relax you, shove a sheath up your femoral artery, inject some iodine-based dye, and watch your circulatory system in action via real-time x-ray video. Turns out that my right descending artery had completely collapsed, evidently an ancient event, since a system of ancillary arteries had already sprouted up, allowing blood to bypass the blockage. "That's quite common in dogs," an Anthony Edwards-lookalike cardiologist said and we both laughed for hours and hours.

But my circumflex and OM were dangerously blocked, and balloon angioplasty was recommended. Since I have money shooting out of my ass 24 hours a day I said, "Sure, go ahead." I asked if I'd be asleep for the procedure and the Edwards lookalike said that I'd be awake but sleepy, "like you were today."

"Doc," I said, "it takes more than 5 measly milligrams of Valium to make me sleepy." He rechecked my medical history and realized the folly of this insignificant dosage.

"Well, we'll start out with 5 mg. and if you need more we'll give it to you."

"No Demerol, then?" I asked and we both laughed for hours and hours.

Balloon angioplasty is also done with the aid of live X-ray video and I was able to watch in fascination (thanks to many more shots of Valium) as a tiny guide wire was snaked up through my leg and the tiny balloon was inflated, expanding my plaque-plagued arteries to a serviceable new diameter. Both procedures were saved to CD-ROM and the hospital staff was kind enough to burn a copy of each for me.

Now if there's a lesson here, then learning it probably depends on whether or not you believe God exists, and if so, whether or not you believe he's a total dick. I mean, either I've been graced with a second chance or I've been doomed to a life without the vices I cherish so much. Considering how long I survived before getting treatment I have to believe that some force in the universe feels I'm worth keeping around, Big Macs and Lucky Strikes notwithstanding.

I mentioned this to my doctor and we both laughed for hours and hours. 🐾

I couldn't read the proprietary format of my angioplasty CD-ROM so I grabbed this Cardiac Cath shot from ISM Interactive's Virtual Surgeon Open Heart.
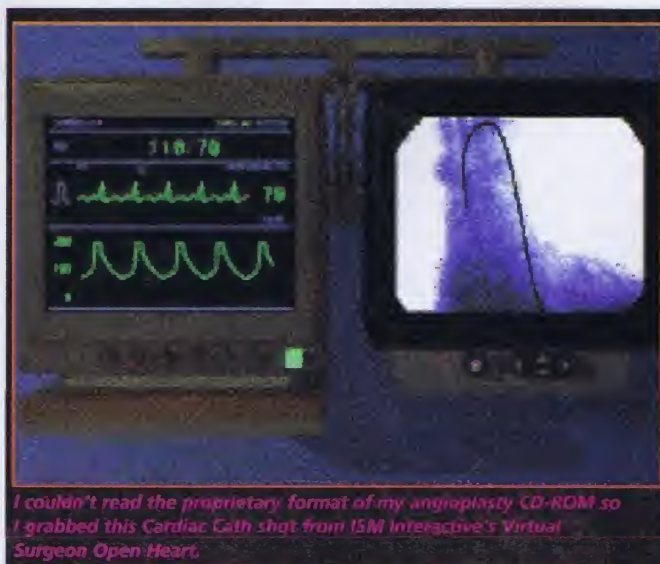
Under The Hood

BY TIM LIEBE

WHEN UPGRADES GO WRONG....

Last issue, I talked about preparations for upgrading your PC, then walked you through installing an internal modem. I selected a modem rather than a sound card or video accelerator because the basic principles for changing any system card are the same. I said then that 95% of the time, you shouldn't have any difficulties. But what about the other 5% of the time, when the new modem (or other expansion card) doesn't work right? That's when you need to do some detective work. Fortunately, most modem (and other expansion card) problems fall into a few basic categories; before you chuck the card, try these out first:

1) Is the Card Seated Firmly in its Slot? You'll know this has occurred when you go into "Add New Hardware" in Windows 95's Control Panels, or try to install the software in Windows 3.x or DOS, and the card can't be found. Switch off and unplug the machine again, then run your hand over the top of the new card (after touching the metal part of the case first to discharge static electricity). If one end seems higher than the other, push it down until both ends are level. If it feels level, take the top of the card between thumb and forefinger and gently try to lift it up. If it feels like it'll come out easily, then you haven't seated the card firmly enough; push down on it with the flat of your hand and keep trying to lift it out until it doesn't feel like you can remove the card easily.

2) Are the Phone Lines (Peripherals) Plugged In Correctly? This could be the problem if your software installs properly, but there's no line tone when you try logging on. For other components like sound cards, you'll notice it when you either don't get any audio from your speakers, or you get incredibly loud, distorted sound. Don't panic — it just means you didn't plug your phone line/peripheral into the right jack on the card. It's also easy to fix; just switch the plugs around and try until everything works right.

3) Are the Right Drivers Installed? This is a common one, especially thanks to Windows 95's "Plug-and-Play" feature. Often, Windows 95 will recognize you have a new card on startup and will install what it thinks to be the right software for it. Sometimes that works, and you've got nothing to worry about; other times it doesn't. If Windows 95 automatically installed the incorrect drivers for your upgrade card, go into "Add New Hardware", click on "No" when it asks if you want it to search for new hardware, select modem (or the expansion card you've installed) from the list of hardware components, check the "Don't Detect" option box, click on "Have Disk", and follow the onscreen instructions from there.

4) Do You Have a COM/IRQ Conflict? As you may remember from my last column, both ISA and VL-Bus cards each want their own IRQ (out of a possible 16, several of which are already taken). Modems not only use ISA slots as a rule, they also want a COM port (of which you have only two). Because a serial mouse usually uses COM 1, IRQ 4, many modem use COM 2, IRQ 3 as a default setting — which is fine if you don't have anything on COM 2, but can be a real pain if COM 2's taken up by something else. If that's the case, you'll need to adjust the COM/IRQ settings on your modem. Just about all new modems have what are called "DIP switches" on the side of the modem that's sticking out of your PC (see illustration). While you'll need to use a pen point or bent paper clip to flip them, they're much easier to change than jumpers, which are usually on the part of the card that's inside your PC, are real tiny, and are generally bunched together so you can't get at them without tweezers (see illustration). Your manual will give you a series of alternate COM/IRQ DIP switch settings for your modem. Be sure that nothing else is using the IRQ and set your modem for that.
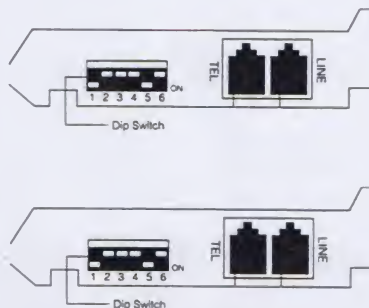
5) Did You Forget to Disable Your Old Modem/Expansion Card? Modems, video adapters, sound cards and motherboards used to all be separate components that could easily be spotted and replaced. These days, though, some PC manufacturers (like Packard-Bell or Compaq) are cutting corners by using combination sound card/modems, or motherboards with video adapters built in. If your PC is one of these, and you didn't disable your old component before adding the new one (usually by switching around the appropriate jumper settings), the system conflict could destroy the entire multipurpose card! If you've looked inside your PC and can't readily spot a separate modem, sound card or video adapter, read the computer's manual carefully before attempting an upgrade!

6) When All Else Fails, Call Tech Support! Most component manufacturers give you at least 30 days free Tech Support so you can get your component up and running. Before getting rid of your new modem or other component, give them a call and see if they can't help you. Even if they can't be of service, at least they'll be able to tell you how to go about replacing the defective component.

The Battle-zone

BY ALAN C. FUSCO

Strategy Games: Real-Time vs Turn-Based OR Something Else?

Talk about the advantages of real-time movement to a turn-based grognard, or vise versa, and you're likely to have a fight on your hands. Proponents on both sides of the fence elegantly and dogmatically defend the virtues of their favorite system. The war, however, is won ultimately in the mind and imagination of the current crop of game designers. If the number of games being produced is taken into account, turn-based strategy games may, very quickly, become a thing of the past. (I sure hope not.)

As I see it, turn-based games have one strong factor in their favor – time. The player has the time to plan out his or her strategy and to weigh options without the pressure of a real-time attack. Like two grand Chess masters, the player vs computer or player vs player interaction is a test of logic and sound strategy versus an arcade like touch (How many times can you click on an enemy unit to destroy it?). Real-time proponents stress that this is hardly realistic since events are always moving in the real world. The truth of the matter, however, is that for games covering any type of grand scale real-time turns are just not possible (How many years do you have to play a real-time WWII Pacific Theatre game?). The amount of time an average person is going to ponder a move is irrelevant given the time scope of such a game. However, once we get down to the individual units in a game, as seems to be all the rage these days with Command and Conquer clones flowing out of "gamesville" at an alarming rate, real-time proponents have a strong point. A turn-based C&C, for example, would definitely be a different beast all together. Yet, games such as XCOM and XCOM II showed that a turn-based squad level strategy game could work very well; however, even I will admit that the real-time mode of XCOM III make for a much more dynamic and exciting game.

When it comes to real-time games, they have one strong disadvantage – time. Surprised? You shouldn't be. Even the most die-hard real-time grognard has to admit that they can't be in all places at the same time (actually, according to a quantum physics professor I had, if you were an electron you could be in all places at the same time). This is really the Achilles heel of real-time strategy games. In order for units to function as you want them to, you need to "baby-sit" them. This is no small trick when you're coming under a major attack. Of course, if the truth be told, all a commander can do, no matter what his or her rank, is to give orders and moral support and hope the people under command will follow orders. A commander will never be able to enter another's body and "take over" their actions or force them to undertake a "suicide" mission.

I started seriously thinking about these problems several years ago when I started research on a game I was developing. The game was going to deal with the campaigns of *Alexander the Great*. I was very quickly confronted with the mechanics of how a game of this nature should be designed. How do I model the warfare of the period? Usually orders were given, backup plans made and the attack begun. In most battles *Alexander* was in the heat of battle and hard pressed to give any further orders. Even if those orders were given, how long would it take for a commander to see the signal flags or be approached by a rider. How fast would he be able to adjust his tactics? How do I model things such as moral, initiative and training? In fact, some historians think that the training and organized drills while forming into a battle array actually struck fear into the hearts of less trained armies and may have contributed to some of *Alexander's* successes. How do I recreate this? How do I setup reconnaissance and populate a battle map with those findings. How do I sit down with my generals and give them their orders in all their permutations? While a turn-based solution was possible, I felt it would give the user to much control over battlefield units (of course, some think that there is no such thing as too much control). Surprisingly a real-time system would also have the same flaw in that each unit could be directly controlled. Clearly I needed to think about another approach. While this game never did see the light of day, some of my solutions may be food for thought for future strategy games. Beginning in my next column I will begin to define what I think is a good compromise between real-time and turn-based combat systems.

If you have any comments, suggestions or just want to chat about strategy and wargames my Email address is: **afusco@aol.com**

Great Battles of Alexander

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

X-COM

The Rant

BY ALLEN RAUSCH

WHAT'S UP WITH MAGAZINE ETHICS?

I was actually a little late getting this column in because it was so difficult to drag myself out of the hot tub that Activision had installed in my apartment. Besides, between my new Lucasarts THX home theater and the free cases of champagne and prostitutes that Electronic Arts keeps sending to me, it's a wonder I even show up to work at all. Such is the fabulous life of the game reviewer and magazine editor. At least, that's what a few disgruntled conspiracy theorists and lunatics on Usenet would have you believe.

The percieved "corruption" of the gaming press has been a hot topic in this industry lately. By the amount of flap, you'd think that someone had uncovered another Watergate conspiracy. "The gaming press gets all this free stuff, they're all bought and paid for!", goes the cry. In that vein, I'd like to speak to those people who think that The X-files is a documentary - Dudes, throttle back on the paranoia meter! We're talking about computer games, not selling nuclear weapons to North Korea!

I'd be the first to admit that having China funneling money to a reporter for Time or Newsweek in return for ignoring Tibetan atrocities might be considered a Bad Thing. That, however, is a far cry from Microsoft sending me a plastic Viking helmet along with a beta copy of Age of Empires. The Usenet nutballs would tell you that the difference is only a matter of degree. However, they'd be wrong for one very simple reason, a gaming magazine is not a news magazine!

News magazines are by nature negative. Their mandate is to pursue stories that their participants might not want you to know about, but about which the public needs be made aware. Gaming mags like any other non-news magazine, be it Cosmopolitan, Entertainment Weekly, or Car & Driver have a positive orientation in that the subjects of their stories often want this information released. That doesn't mean that gaming mags don't cover negative stories about the industry or say negative things about companies. A look at certain game reviews points that out. It means that the nature of the stories is different and requires different methods of collection.

The difference can be illustrated by comparing a Time story on a motion picture's illegal accounting practices to a Entertainment Weekly story on the gala premiere of that same motion picture at Cannes. Both stories can be reported fairly, honestly, and with proper attention to journalistic ethics. Still, the differing natures of the magazines require different methods of reportage. Does anyone accuse Entertainment Weekly of being unethical because the reporter at Cannes attended the premiere party and ate some of the food at the buffet table? No, because that's where the story was!

That illustration relates directly to the biggest bone of contention, our "free trips". Leaving out for a moment the fact that these infrequent trips are short, annoying, and remarkably unspectacular, let's talk about the once-in-a-blue-moon really great trip to Hawaii or Las Vegas. The question that gets raised is often "What can possibly get revealed about a game being shown in Hawaii that can't be shown on a desk in the developers office?" The answer is nothing. However, what's missed in that accusation is the fact that the venue for the presentation isn't up to the magazine. The companies choose to run these PR events!

Are they trying to garner positive press? Of course they are! That's what PR events are all about! If readers can figure that out what makes you think that magazine writers can't? That doesn't change the fact that that's where the story is, and that's why the reporter goes! No game magazine has ever said to a company "There'll be no preview for this game unless it's shown to me during a free trip to Disney World". If a company wants to take a writer to an event, and you think it might lead to a story - you go.

True, the gaming press has it's problems. There have been instances of inappropriate influence and editorial misjudgements. That's why magazines have more than one editor (plus proofreaders, and fact checkers) to run interference. Even if a reporter has been paid off with a kilo of cocaine to give Super Commie Fighters 12 a 98% rating (and I'd love to see that expense report), he or she still has to get the story past an editor who should know enough to say "98%? What'd they do, give you a kilo of cocaine?"

It's an awfully big leap, however, to go from unfortunate errors and a few instances of unethical behavior to accusing an entire industry of being hopelessly corrupt. The tobacco industry got more benefit of the doubt than that! In the end it comes down to whether or not you trust what you read. Companies place ads in magazines because they want to reach gamers. Gamers read magazines because they trust the editorial content (it takes an awfully dim reader to mistake editorial content for advertising). It would be awfully stupid for any magazine to alienate their readers with corrupt reporting because when the readers stop buying the magazine the companies stop advertising! When that happens the magazine folds and I'm out of a job.

Ethical standards are the provocation levels at which you will or won't do certain things. I'm no saint, but it would take a lot more than the pathetic perks that this industry offers to buy my integrity, and I'm certainly not unique in that regard. I got into this industry because I'm a gamer who loves games. Most folks at the other magazines (and at the companies for that matter) are in it for the same reason. We work too damn long and hard for too little money to be here for any other reason. If we wanted the the big bucks and incredible freebies, we would have run for Congress, because they just don't exist here. And the chuckleheads on the Usenet who think otherwise should try actually working in this industry before shooting their mouths off making wild accusations without a shred of proof.
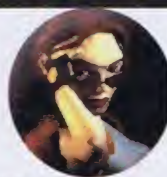
It's Good To Be Dead

Hints and Tips for The Curse Of Monkey Island:

by Andy Backer

The following hints and tips are for the Mega Monkey version. However, they should also be very helpful to players playing the simpler version. It just omits some of the Mega version's objects and transitions. You don't need items like paste in the simpler version (and therefore you don't have to combine paste with other objects to make them work). There is no treasure map nor buttons to press in the theater's lighting booth. Rather than giving the dog the maggoty biscuit, you can pick up doggie treats to give him. Any drink chosen comes with an umbrella. Madame Xima immediately deals five death cards, rather than having to be coaxed into doing so one at a time. You can use the anchor with one of the pies already at the Wharf Rat's booth, rather than having to make your own.

Seek help to remove Elaine's golden curse.

Fire the cannon at the four longboats. Fire it again to smash through the door of the treasure hold.

LECHUCK'S SHIP

You are Guybrush Threepwood and you're locked in the cannon room. Pick up the ramrod and ask the small pirate questions until you recognize him. Then tell him he's a failure as a pirate and threaten him until he breaks down and loses his fake hook. Take the hook and fire the cannon at the four longboats. Crawl out the porthole, combine the hook with the ramrod to make a gaff, and fish out the skeleton arm holding the cutlass. Use the cutlass to cut the cannon's restraining rope and fire it again to smash through the door of the treasure hold. To escape the sinking ship pick up the bag of wooden nickels and then use the large diamond ring on the glass porthole.

THE VOODOO LADY

Seek help to lift Elaine's golden curse. Go to the swamp (picking up the glowing ember before you leave the beach). Tell the talking skull that you have no time to talk and enter the derelict. Pull the alligator's tongue to talk to the Voodoo lady. Tell her that she has a nice place and she'll eventually talk about Blood Island and the map, ship, and crew you need to get there. Pick up the paste and the pin stuck in the paper doll. Use your bag of nickels to get a pack of gum from the vending machine.

THE SHIP

Go into town and enter the stage door of the theater. Examine the hanging coat and remove what appears to be dandruff but is really lice. Open the coat pocket and take the glove. Take the magic wand and use it on the magic hat to get a book on ventriloquism. Examine first the trunk and then the Blood Island sticker on it and then go

to the barbershop.

Put the lice on the barber's comb to free the chair. Sit down and crank the handle once before taking the paperweight. After the barber leaves, crank the handle until you can grab the scissors.

Just past Blondbeard's Chicken Shop is a patch of undergrowth and ipecac flowers. Snip one of the flowers from its stem with the scissors and then snip a path through the undergrowth. On the other side is an area with a sign that reads "falling snakes." To escape the snake that swallows you, take everything you find inside it, and then combine the pancake syrup with the ipecac flower and pour the emetic into the snake's mouth.

To escape the quicksand, grab a hollow reed and a thorn. Make a peashooter out of the reed with the thorn. Combine the paperweight with a balloon and blow it

To escape the quicksand, grab a hollow reed and a thorn.

After you've been tarred and feathered, return to the Chicken Shop.

Convince Fossey to abandon ship by using the book of ventriloquism on LeChimp.

over to the tree branch. Pop the balloon with the peashooter and grab the vine.

Examine the damaged rowboat in Danjer Cove and walk back to town. Enter the Chicken Shop and reply "Of course," when Blondebeard asks if you have a reservation (you found one inside the snake). Take a biscuit from the barrel and eat it to find maggots. Put the maggots on the blackened chicken to reveal a club card. Nudge the man sitting at the table and take the serrated breadknife sticking in his back. Take the pie pan and biscuit cutter, leave the building, and go through the archway near the theater. Walk to the rubber trees beyond the caber toss field. Get a rubber plug from the trees with the biscuit cutter.

Return to the rowboat and repair it with the rubber plug (dipped in paste). Row out to the ship, saw through the plank with your breadknife, and board the ship. After you've been tarred and feathered, return to the Chicken Shop. Blondebeard knocks you out and you wake inside the ship's cabin. Convince Fossey to abandon ship by using the book of ventriloquism on LeChimp. Take the treasure map from the table, open the porthole, and jump out (using the plank to paddle back to the Cove).

TREASURE

Go to the theater and climb up the stairs into the lighting booth. Pull the lever on the control panel to turn on all the lights. Press the buttons that correspond to the directions on the Treasure Map. When it says take two steps, press that button twice. An X appears on top of Yorick's grave. Go downstairs and put chicken

After Slappy is thrown off the stage, pick up the shovel, and dig up Yorick's grave to find Elaine's statue.

grease on the juggling balls inside the open trunk. After Slappy is thrown off the stage, pick up the shovel and dig up Yorick's grave to find Elaine's statue.

CREW

With Elaine safe in the Crow's Nest, it's time to gather your crew. Go to the barbershop and talk to the Salty Pirate. Hit (push) him on the back to cause him to choke on the jawbreaker, then hit him again to dislodge it. Take the jawbreaker to Blondebeard and give it to him. Then give him a stick of gum. When he blows a bubble, pop it with your pin. Pick up his tooth, chew some gum, combine the wad with the tooth, and chew the combination. Blow a bubble and the tooth floats out the window. Now, when Blondebeard searches you for the tooth, you won't have it. Use the pie pan to retrieve the tooth from the mud puddle outside. Show the tooth to Blondebeard and he joins your crew.

The Dapper Pirate in the Barbershop is Cutthroat Bill. He won't join your crew until you beat him in a duel (slap him with your glove to challenge him). Close the middle pistol case to reveal a banjo case and open it to choose the banjo. Imitate Bill's playing (you have time to write down the order of the strings he plucks) and he will break into a long unimitateable solo. Grab a pistol and shoot his banjo to win the duel and gain another crewmember.

Go to the grassy knoll in the caber toss clearing and saw the legs off the sawhorse. Blow up the rubber tree by lighting the trail of rum with the remarkable still glowing ember. Challenge McMutton, the barber, and agree to a caber toss which you

Keep fighting and upgrading until you defeat Rottingham and win back the map.

easily win with a bouncing caber.

MAP TO BLOOD ISLAND

Go to the Brimstone Beach Club (it's in the southwest corner of the island). You have your crew; it's time to get the map to Blood Island. Show your club card to the Cabana Boy and threaten to sunbathe nude if he gives you any grief about entering the premises. Pick up three towels and soak them in the ice bucket. Flick one at the Cabana Boy to get rid of him. Use the towels to walk across the hot sand. Take Palido's mug and go to Kenny's lemonade stand. Exchange your mug for Kenny's bottomless mug and ask Kenny for a lemonade. Drink it, Kenny leaves, take the pitcher and dip it into the red dye vat next to the stand. Go back to the beach and give the bottomless mug to Palido and pour the red dye into it. He turns over. Pour cooking oil on his back. Peel the map

from his back after he gets a sunburn. Join your crew on your ship.

SHIP COMBAT

You lose the map to Rottingham in a duel. Your crew will keep singing until you pick a phrase that ends in "orange." Talk to McMutton to switch back and forth from easy to hard mode. Look at the navigational charts and select a weak pirate ship to battle. Fire your cannon, board the ship, win the duel, and take the treasure. Go to port and upgrade your cannon. Keep fighting and upgrading until you defeat Rottingham and win back the map.

A BOTTLE OF LOTION

McMutton has a bottle of hand lotion that may help remove the ring from Elaine's golden finger. However, the ship has been caught up in a storm and now stands wrecked on the beach of Blood Island. Elaine is missing, and the crew wants to go home. McMutton agrees to give you the lotion in return for a tar substitute.

Pick up the bottle on the beach and bite the cork to open the bottle and get the cork. Go to the bar in the hotel. Goodsoup is hung over and won't talk until he's well. Find the recipe for a hangover cure in the recipe book on the bar and set about finding the ingredients. Take the cushion from the barstool before you leave. Go to the windmill and pick a wild pepper. Feed the maggoty biscuit to the dog behind the cemetary. After the dog bites you, take a patch of his smelly dog hair. Take the mallet and chisel by the unfinished headstone.

Go to the beach near the hotel and combine the cushion with the rocks under the tree. Hit the tree with your mallet to shake the egg out of the nest. Pick up the egg. Give the egg, the hair, and the pepper

Feed the maggoty biscuit to the dog.

to Goodsoup. He mixes the cure, drinks it, and gives the rest to you. Talk to him about the lost ring. He tells you that the only way into his Aunt's crypt—where the engagement band is on her finger—is to be buried there. Chisel open the hangover cure and ask Goodsoup for a drink. Choose the fruity one with an umbrella in it. Ask about the missing umbrella and take the one Goodsoup offers. Mix the hangover cure with the drink and slurp it down.

After you pass out and are buried, chisel your way out of your coffin. You're in the wrong crypt. Chisel Stan out of the coffin in the center of the crypt. He gives you his business card and tells you how to open the crypt door. Before you leave, take the nails from your coffin.

Ask Goodsoup why you weren't buried in his aunt's crypt and he tells you that you're not a member of the family. Go upstairs and enter the closet. Pound out the nail in the wall. Return to the hall and pick up the fallen portrait (and nail). Slap the portrait on the closet door and cut the face out with your scissors. Enter the closet and look through the porthole. After Goodsoup looks at the portrait and leaves, use Stan's business card to open the door farther down the hall. Pull out the Murphy bed and

Take the Goodsoup family history book and read it.

Enter the closet and look through the porthole.

Go to the windmill and pick a wild pepper.

nail it down with the coffin nails. Use the portrait nail as well. Take the Goodsoup family history book and read it.

Now ask Goodsoup if you don't look just like a Goodsoup and tell him that you could talk about Goodsoup history all day. After he welcomes you into the family ask him for another drink, spike it, and pass out again.

Walk to the back of the crypt and pick up the crowbar. Walk to the large crack and pick up the talking skull (Murray) after he tries to scare you. Combine the skeleton arm with paste, look through the crack, and use the pasty arm to take the lantern. Put the lantern on the tilted coffin lid and use Murray with the lantern to scare Mort into opening the crypt door. Return to the hotel and enter the storeroom behind the bar. Take the refrigerator magnet, the death certificate and chisel out a block of cheese from the wheel. Go out onto the hotel balcony and put cheese in the barbecue pot.

In the cannibal village, pick up the giant block of tofu from the table. Take the measuring cup and the auger. Use the auger to make a mask out of the tofu and go through the archway to where Lemonhead is standing. Put on the tofu mask and talk to Lemonhead. Witness the sacrifice and then throw the cheese into the caldera to make the volcano erupt. Go back to the hotel balcony and drag the now melted pot of cheese to McMutton and exchange it for the hand lotion.

REMOVING THE CURSE
Go to the firefly clearing near the beach and use the lotion on Elaine's hand. Pull off the ring. The ring explodes but she still has a heart of gold. You're going to have to go to Skull Island to pick up the diamond. First, go upstairs into the gue-

Throw the cheese into the caldera to make the volcano erupt.

stroom and use your crowbar to remove the boards from the hole behind the bed. Remove the nails holding down the bed with the crowbar, as well. The bed will slam shut, launching the groom through the hole into his bride's crypt. They will elope, leaving the engagement band behind. Go to the crypt and pick it up.

Replace the mirror behind the bar with the face of the portrait. Pick up Goodsoup's tip jar and go to the windmill. Hook a windmill blade with your umbrella and ride to the top. Fill the tip jar with sugar water from the barrel. Take the jar to the firefly clearing and set it on the stump. Chisel holes into the jar's lid and close the jar of fireflies.

Goodsoup has told you that the ferry to Skull Island doesn't come to Blood Island since the lighthouse broke. Go to the top of the lighthouse and replace its broken mirror. Set the jar of fireflies on its lantern post. Go to the beach and the ferryman tells you he needs a compass. Fill your measuring cup with seawater, magnetize your

Give the compass to the ferryman and return to the hotel.

Ask Lafoot to lower you down.

Tell King Andre that you have a lot of money and offer to make a deal with him for the Goodsoup diamond.

Go to the top of the lighthouse and replace the broken mirror.

collateral. Cash in the policy for a pile of money (offering the death certificate as proof of death). Ask the ferryman to take you to Skull Island.

Ask Lafoot to lower you down. While you're falling, open your umbrella to safely land in the smuggler's cave. Tell King Andre that you have a lot of money and offer to make a deal with him for the Goodsoup diamond. Play poker with him and show him your five tarot cards to win the game and the diamond.

Use the diamond with the engagement band and slip it on Elaine's finger to remove the curse.

The Big Whoop Carnival
After you finish talking to LeChuck about his plans, he turns you into a little boy. Open the door of the gondola and talk Dinghy Dog into guessing your age. Take the anchor as your prize and hit (push) Dinghy Dog until he bites you to get some of his hair. Use your bottle of shaving cream (did you examine all your bottles to

pin with the refrigerator magnet, stick the pin in your cork, and set it in the measuring cup. Give the compass to the ferryman and return to the hotel.

Keep asking Madame Xima for tarot readings until you've collected five death cards. Enter Stan's Crypt and ask to buy an insurance policy. Offer the gold tooth as

find out what was in them?) with the pie pan, add the anchor, and give the fake heavy pie to Wharf Rat.

After you finish talking to LeChuck about his plans, he turns you into a little boy.

Open the gate to the pie toss booth and look through the hole to get some meringue pie. Get a plain snowcone from the vender, take the pepper mill from the booth counter, and sprinkle pepper on your cone. Add the bits of meringue and the dog hair and you have a hangover cure that will turn you back into a grown man.

Take a ride on the roller coaster and get off at the various stops. Grab a piece of rope from the hanging man's noose. Open the lantern and blow it out to get the flask of oil. Pick up the keg of rum. Combine the oil with the rope, and use the flammable rope with the keg of rum to make a bomb. Go to the snow monkey diorama and use the bomb with the arm of the giant snow monkey (scroll up to see him). Go back to the roller coaster and wait for LeChuck. Sprinkle him with pepper when he arrives.

He sneezes, igniting the bomb, and starts an avalanche. Jump free and marry Elaine. Congratulations, you've finished the game!

Keep asking Madame Xima for tarot readings until you've collected five death cards.

Do Replicants Dream Of Electric Sheep?

Hints and Tips for Blade Runner

By Andy Backer

Characters in Blade Runner are assigned a different agenda each time the player begins a new game. There are many variations and at least two different endings. Every decision the player makes spins the game in a different direction, particularly deciding not to kill the replicants in the game. Players may also choose different difficulty levels and conversation modes. The following walkthrough is based on a game played with an Easy difficulty setting, User's Choice conversation mode, and an unsympathetic view of replicants.

Runciter's Animals

You are Ray McCoy, rookie Blade Runner. You've been assigned to investigate a possible link between renegade replicants and the vicious animal murders at Runciter's. After you've flown to the crime site in your spinner, search for clues outside the building and talk to the officer.

Go inside and keep talking to Runciter until he gives you Lucy's reference letter. Point out the surveillance camera and he'll

Police Station

Upload to the right monitor and enhanceable images automatically download to the large monitor.

give you its disc. Bag the candy bar on the desk in the rear of the room, the toy dog, and the chop stick wrapper on the floor. Fly to the Police Station.

Police Station

Take the elevator from the roof to the second floor and enter the room with the ESPER sign. Upload to the right monitor and photos automatically download to the large monitor. Select the left enhanceable photograph and drag a "box" around the small table in the rear for a blow up. Do the same with Lucy's head, and then her left foot (she's partially concealed behind the right edge of the Tiger's cage). Select the button marked "X" to quit the image. Select the second photograph. Blow up the head and shoes of the figure in the rear.

Exit the room and enter the Combat Shooting Course across the hall. Talk to the Sergeant and enter the door on the right. Follow the instructions for the four stations and exit. Check out your score on the monitor in the hall. Go to the Police Lab on the third floor and talk to Dino (he can't tell you anything until after you've uploaded into the ESPER). Take the elevator to the roof and fly your spinner to Chinatown.

Chinatown

Talk to Howie Lee about Lucy, the Runciter clues, and Zuben. Follow Zuben into the kitchen, save the game, and talk to him. Be prepared to jump to the side when Zuben turns over the pot. Follow him out the door, down the alley, through the door, up the stairs and into the building. Check out the door at the end of the hall. When Zuben attacks retire him. Walk back, talk to Gaff, and fly home.

Runciter's Animal Emporium

Keep talking to Runciter until you get Lucy's reference letter.

Chinatown

Talk to Howie Lee about Lucy, the Runiciter clues, and Zuben.

McCoy's Apartment

Enter the elevator and select your apartment (McCoy 88f). Play with Maggie, feed her, walk into the bedroom, and out onto the balcony. Go back to the bedroom and sleep in your bed to end Act One.

The Tyrell Building

At the beginning of Act Two, talk to Guzza on the Vidphone and fly the spinner to The Tyrell Building. Talk to the security guard and take the elevator to the Grav Test control room. Bag the earring and brochure. Enter the Grav Test room. Bag the dog collar and the take out box from Kingston Kitchen in the center of the room. Examine the body. Exit to the Grav Test control room and hack into the computer (automatically using the name on the dog collar) to get a disk of data. Go back to the lobby and talk to Crystal. Ask

Zuben Attacks

When Zuben attacks kill him.

the security guard about the crime scene and fly to the Police Station.

Lockup

Download your clues and evidence and check out the new photograph in the ESPER. Drag a box around the head of the suspect (Sadik), his left hand, the dog, and the food carton. Go across the hall and examine the crate on the floor. Talk to the Sergeant to get a form. Examine your personal clue database (click on yourself). Select the clue icon (magnifying glass) and listen to the Gregorian Interviews A and B. Enter the elevator and go to the basement (Lockup). Talk to Spencer Grigorian; return to your spinner and fly to Animoid Row.

Animoid Row

Walk to the far end and talk to Hassan, the

Animoid Row

Talk to Hassan, the snake dealer, who will direct you to the Peruvian Lady sitting in the Dragonfly booth.

snake dealer, who will direct you to the Peruvian Lady sitting in the Dragonfly booth. Then go down the alley to enter Bullet Bob's gun shop. Talk to him and buy some better ammo. Enter Hawker's Circle and talk to Mama Isabella in the Kingston Kitchen. Go to the China Bar and turn left to go to the Green Pawn to talk to Izo (wait around until he returns if he's not there).

Izo tries to blind you with a flash camera and escape. Bag the camera (along with two photographs), enter the shop, shoot the lock on the door of the cage, and climb down the trap. Examine the crates of weapons and then go through the opening at the rear. Climb up the ladder to the street. Izo threatens you with his sword. Crystal either arrests him or kills him. Return to your spinner and go to DNA Row.

The Green Pawn

Go to the Green Pawn to talk to Izo.

DNA Row

Save your game and exit left to Dermo Design. Enter the building, shoot the lock near Maraji's wrist to free him and immediately run into the street (double click the blue arrow) and keep running until you're as far away from the building as possible. After the bomb explodes, talk to Maraji (he dies) and then the cop. Enter the twin's apartment up the stairs. There's an envelope inside the masked mannequin's head. There's a message on the answering machine (the left monitor).

Exit the apartment and go across the street to talk to Chew in Chew's Eye Works about Eisenduller, the Twins, and the envelope. Exit Chew's and walk down the alley and enter the Bradbury Hotel. Walk down the long hallway to the bottom of the screen and enter the next area. Go through

the doorway to the right. Go through the open doorway with the up arrow. Go left to enter the bathroom. Climb up the ladder and chase Sadik down the hall. Punch out all the drawers in the right row of the bureau and climb through the hole in the roof to end the act.

Yukon Hotel

Act Three begins with you tied to a chair in the Yukon Hotel. After everyone leaves hop over to the heater in the left rear corner of the room and untie yourself. Check out the doll's heel for a clue, and then examine the doll. Pick up the cheese under the chair and go to the lobby. Stop Leon from choking the desk clerk by talking to him. Exit the lobby, pick up the object on the floorboard of the car on the street, and

Dermo Design

Shoot the lock near Maraji's wrist to free him.

The Apartment

There's an envelope inside the masked mannequin's head.

walk down the street to the left. Return to your spinner screen right and fly to the Police Station. Upload your clues. Check out the new photographs (the man at the shop behind you appears to be holding something interesting). The man talking to the woman at the China Bar is familiar. Return to the spinner and fly to Hysteria Hall.

Hysteria Hall and Nightclub Row

Dektora, Lucy, and Gordo all need to be encountered and dealt with either at Hysteria Hall or Nightclub Row. At least one of the three is always a replicant, and the last of the three to be encountered is always a replicant. If Lucy is not in Hysteria Hall, you'll have to return after checking out Gordo and Dektora in Nightclub Row.

First, try flying to the Hall and talking to the hot dog vender about Lucy and cheese.

Yukon Hotel

Hop over to the heater in the left rear corner of the room and untie yourself.

shoots your kidnappers. You are automatically returned to Early's. After Crystal leaves, walk up the stairs (not the stage stairs) to the projection booth. When Dektora flashes a spotlight in your eyes, fire your weapon, and go up the ladder into the attic. Shoot at any of the wardrobe closets. They flame up and Dektora attacks. Shoot her and she falls out the attic window to her death. Talk to Crystal and Act Three ends.

Underground

Act Four begins in the subway. Exit left into the tunnel. Cross it, shooting any attacking rats. Avoid killing anything but the rats while you're underground. You can generally run past attacking policemen. Go through the hole in the wall. Open the heavy metal door in the rear and

Talk to Crazy Leggs Larry, the used car lot owner, about the used Cadillac and Lucy. If Lucy is in the Hall, talk to her and chase her if she runs (double click the right exit), otherwise you'll have to return later. Fly to Animoid Row and talk to Mama Isabella about the cheese and to the Peruvian Lady about the insect jewelry. Then fly to Nightclub Row.

If Lucy is the last of the three encountered she screams during your interview and a phony cop knocks you unconscious and takes you underground where Crystal rescues you. After you go to the surface you'll automatically return to Hysteria Hall where Crystal shoots her.

Nightclub Row

Enter the Nightclub to the right and talk to Gordo. He wears a red jacket and sits at the bar. Hang around until he finishes his act. When he runs chase him into the street. If he has a gun, shoot him. Let him go if he doesn't. Cross the street and enter Early's bar. Try to talk to the dancer on the stage. When Hanoi, the bouncer, walks towards you, run to the revolving booth to the left and sit down. The booth will revolve and you'll be in Early's private lounge. Talk to Early (he wears red tails). After he leaves the room to announce the next act, exit left and enjoy Dektora's dance. Exit left again to enter her dressing room. She's through the door to the right at her dressing table in the back room. Talk to her. If she's a replicant she pretends to call the police and phony cops knock you unconscious and take you underground. Otherwise, she passes the Voight-Kampff test and walks out.

Underground, you wake up strapped to a machine, Crystal rescues you and

Hysteria Hall

Talk to the hot dog vender about Lucy and cheese.

Nightclub

Gordo wears a red jacket and sits at the bar.

Dektora's dessing room

If Dektora calls the cops she's a replicant.

enter the intersecting catwalk room. A lever in the middle operates a mechanized bridge connecting the fourth catwalks. Do not cross the bridge but continue walking left into a room with a stairway down. Walk down the stairs and continue walking left and enter the room with a ladder leading to a manhole. Exit through the manhole and enter your apartment building. Take the elevator to your apartment.

After being chased out, retrace your steps to the intersecting catwalks. Enter the tunnel in the rear. Take the exit right and enter the elevator. Talk to the homeless man in the room (if he's there). Take the requisition form on the table (if it's there).

Sewer system

Exit through the manhole and enter your apartment building.

Twin's Lab

The tunnel on the right leads to the back entrance of the Twins' underground lab

The tunnel on the right leads to the back entrance of the Twin's underground lab. Save your game. Try to cross the plank. As soon as you see the rat, run back and get off the plank. Shoot the rat when he is at the near end of the plank, but before he can attack you.

Enter the lab and talk to the Twins. Because you revisited the Peruvian Lady and Mama Isabella, they should be there. Talk to them and when the conversation is finished, shoot them dead (they're just replicants, aren't they?) Hack into the two computer monitors near their body. You should get a disk and a file on Guzza. Walk up the stairs at the far end of the room to enter the Twins' apartment. Call Guzza from the Vidphone on the right. He'll make an appointment to meet you in the Sewers. Return to the room with the sleeping homeless man.

Exit through the metal gate in the rear left of the room. Meet with Guzza. When Clovis starts talking to him, back up to the exit. When Guzza gets shot and dies, immediately get out. As you try to leave the tunnel and go to the intersection Clovis grabs your hand through the bars and breaks your fingers. When he lets go run to the bottom of the screen and exit. Run to the left exit in the intersection, walk down the stairs, climb through the manhole, and return to your now empty apartment to end the act.

Moon Bus

When Act Five begins answer the Vidphone and talk to Crystal. Leave the apartment and go to the ground floor. Climb through the manhole and exit screen right. Climb the stairs but do not go into the intersection. Instead exit through the doorway in the rear (top of the screen). Walk north and exit into a room with a huge fan and two attacking rats. Shoot the rats and exit screen left to meet Crystal in the Kibble.

After talking to Crystal follow her to the Moon Bus. Point out that the blinking light is a bomb before Crystal sets it off. Do not approach Maggie when she barks. She comes towards you and the bomb tied to her explodes. Kill Sadik when he approaches. Walk into the Moon Bus and confront a dying Clovis. You can either let him talk until he dies or shoot him first. Leave the Moon Bus and a meaningful conversation with Crystal ends the game.

It's Better to Annihilate Than to Be Annihilated:

A Hints & Tips Guide for Total Annihilation

By Selby Bateman

Total Annihilation has become one of the biggest hits of 1997, and it appears likely to continue its best-selling status during 1998. The real-time strategy game is not only a major step forward in this game genre, but it continues to evolve as the developer, Cavedog Entertainment, releases totally new downloadable units for both Core and Arm. No game has

But you gotta crawl before you walk. You gotta walk before you run. And in TA, you gotta understand Build and Order priorities before you can move your mobile Merls to take out a perimeter line of Cans or airlift a Crawling Bomb to detonate over an enemy base. Whether you are playing the single-player missions or going online with the multiplayer maps, success depends

multiplayer game, it's vital that you first build several Solar Collectors (or Wind Generators), followed by Metal Extractors. You've got to start generating resources before you get sidetracked. Metal tends to be scarcer than energy, except on Core Prime. A Radar Tower is usually the next structure to build, unless you are under immediate attack. Radar lets you know just how close the enemy is, and in which direction. There's no sense building a base that faces the wrong way!

Scouting the surrounding area is crucial. You need to know whether the map is primarily land-based, water-based, or a combination. Build a Kbot Lab or a Vehicle Plant first, so that you can get a Jeffy scout vehicle or a couple of PeeWees out on patrol to scout for metal deposits and surrounding geography. It's generally not wise to begin your construction efforts by building an Aircraft Plant. Although you will be able to scout widely, you leave your base open to aggressive ground attacks.

Total Annihilation is a game that rewards offensive play more often than defensive play. If you like to sit back and build huge well-defended fortresses, remember that the enemy is out there taking all of the metal deposits and steam vents.

However, you do need to build some base protection. Some players favor building a Light Laser Tower or two, but each of them costs over 2,500 energy units and over 250 metal units. Early in the game, it's usually better to consider a mobile defense force of Jeffys, PeeWees, and Flash tanks. They can react to attacks in several different areas, and they can be ordered to

enjoyed this kind of continual renewal before, and TA fans love it. This ensures that the unique real-time 3D-rendered universe of TA doesn't become stale and predictable.

on how quickly you can intuitively gather resources, build units and structures, and set a plan for defensive and offensive strategies.

Getting Started

There are a few fundamentals that every TA player should understand. When you start a mission or a

Guard particular structures.

As soon as you have secured resources, established radar, and set up a perimeter of some kind, your thoughts should include building construction units as soon as possible. Success in *TA* is based, in part, on how quickly you can climb the technology tree from Level-1 constructionplants to mobile construction units to advanced construction plants and then to advanced mobile construction units. Think of *TA* as a race against your opponents as well as a strategic and tactical combat game.

Beachhead on Thalassean
Arm mission 6, Beachhead on Thalassean, causes problems for a lot of beginning players because it calls on a variety of offensive and defensive maneuvers in an environment that includes naval units, a multi-front defensive strategy, and scarce resources. And, for those reasons, it's a good example of how multiple simultaneous activities are crucial to winning at *TA*.

Your goal is to have the Commander quickly eliminate a few Core units and prepare to defend against a series of naval attacks. You've simply got to outlast the attacks and make sure all Core units are destroyed. When your Commander steps through the Galactic Gate onto Thalassean, be ready to shoot the surrounding Core A.K. units. Don't use the Disintegrator Gun, because it leaves no metal traces once the A.K.s are gone. The Commander can then Reclaim the metal. You may have to practice the opening a few times to become a quick-shot artist against the A.K. units.Build several Metal Extractors and Wind Generators. (Thalassean is a windy planet, so they're better than Solar Collectors on this planet.) Core will send a Searcher scout ship or two into the center of the horseshoe-shaped harbor. The Commander can D-Gun them right away. Remember that reclaiming Core wreckage both on land and underwater is a key to keeping your Metal resources up. But, in general, always try to have a Construction Ship reclaim sunken ships. The Commander can't shoot underwater and is vulnerable to enemy subs.

Your next move is to order the Commander to build a Shipyard in the harbor. The best Shipyard construction path to take is to start with a Lurker submarine, followed by a Construction Ship, then a Crusader destroyer and more subs. On the south side of the island, your Commander will encounter a couple of A.K. sentries. Shoot them and reclaim the metal.

Core naval units will attack from the east side of the island first, then later from the west side. Have a Lurker sub, or two, and a Crusader patrol the mouth of the harbor at the east while the Construction Ship builds one or two Torpedo Launchers. One of the Construction Ship's most important functions is to reclaim metal from any sunken ships as soon as possible. Build a small fleet of Lurkers and Crusaders, plus a couple of Skeeter scout ships to be able to counterattack against Core ships.

Keep the Hammers Moving
Now it's time to build some west coast firepower. As you continue to build ships and

ARM

BULLDOG: A heavy assault tank whose bark ain't nothing compared to its Mike Tyson-esque bite.	**FUSION POWER PLANT:** Make yourself some energy through the miracle of nuclear reaction.
FREEDOM FIGHTER: An air-to-air fighter that escorts Arm bombers as they merrily nuke Core targets.	**GEOTHERMAL POWERPLANT:** Geothermal: Of or relating to the internal heat of the Earth.
PEEWEE: A cheap Infantry KBOT (Kinetic Bio-Organic Technology). We're talking mass-production destruction.	**METAL EXTRACTOR:** Yanks precious ore straight out of the planet's crust. That's gotta hurt.
ZEUS: This lightning-armed KBOT is the god of thunder...and rock 'n roll.	**SOLAR COLLECTOR:** This giant array of panels is good for much more than the hot-water heater.

CORE

A.K.: An Infantry KBOT so cute you almost want to give it a hug.	**ENERGY STORAGE:** Stash some juice for a rainy day — or when those damn Arm forces blow up your collectors.
INTIMIDATOR: A long-range plasma cannon with the name of a pro wrestler.	**METAL EXTRACTOR:** Does what it says — just like the Arm version, only it looks a little cooler.
SHADOW: Just bomb it.	**VEHICLE PLANT:** Let's make us some tanks and transports, Vern!
STORM: A rocket-launching KBOT with a bad attitude.	**WIND GENERATOR:** A device which, like most daytime talk shows, gets a lot of use from hot air.
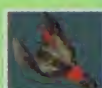
cannon or two along the western edge of the island. Guardians are the best land cannons for island

FIVE TIPS:
for ANNIHILATIN'

Trashing The Cans: One of the toughest Core units is The Can, a Level-2 armored assault Kbot that packs a powerful plasma cannon. It gives Arm fits because there's really no comparable unit. Use Arm's Merl mobile rocket launcher at a distance to chase and clobber Cans. Or, even better, attack with Brawler gunship aircraft—The Cans can't touch them.

Get On With It!: Having trouble getting past a certain mission? Cavedog has placed a cheat option that lets you access all the missions in an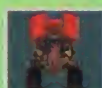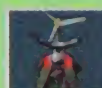y order. From the Single Player Game screen, type DRDEATH. You will see a small Cavedog bone logo icon appear faintly between the Previous Menu and Load Game icons. Mouse click on the bone, and another screen opens with all Arm and Core missions selectable.

Capture It!: One of your Commander's order options that is under-appreciated by most gamers is Capture. It can turn your opponents' units and structures against them. One easy example: If your Commander comes upon a lone enemy Light Laser Tower, capture it. The Commander will take some damage, but suddenly you've got the laser, not your opponent.

Repair, to Build: Your Commander can also assist your construction plants and mobile construction units by using the Repair order to speed up any construction that is going on. Simply have your Commander walk over to a construction in progress, click on Repair, and then click on the construction. The Build speed zooms!

Love your Veterans: When one of your units destroys five other units, its status changes to "veteran, increasing its rate of fire, weapon strength and accuracy, armor durability, and the amount of time it takes your Commander to capture it. Every additional five units destroyed further increases that unit's powers. Keep those veterans repaired.

defense.

Your Shiyard should continue to produce subs and destroyers, several of which will need to be moved around the north side of the island to reach the west coast. Set north-south patrol routes for these ships along the western edge of the island. Order your Construction Ship to build an Advanced Shipyard. You will need Piranha attack subs and Conqueror cruisers. The Conquerors are especially effective against other surface ships.

Core's attacks will diminish and finally stop. (It's possible that you may have to search out a Core ship or two if the mission doesn't end when the attacks stop.) It may help you to know that there are several different artificial intelligence (AI) routines in the game that help to provide some randomization every time you play a mission or against the computer in Skirmish mode. If you still have difficulty with a mission, select the Easy difficulty level and practice until you can move up to Medium and then to Hard.

What's most important in this mission—setting the stage for tougher missions ahead—is the simultaneous requirements to build your defenses, reclaim metal, repair units, and expand your territory. This is by no means easy, but it's one of the things that makes *TA* such a blast.
Selby Bateman is the author of Unlock the Secrets to Total Annihilation (GW Press, 1997).

protect the east harbor entrance, send the Commander to the west side of the island to construct a Kbot Lab. Build a half-dozen or so Hammer artillery units to defend against Core ships coming from the west. Keep the Hammers moving up and down the west coast. And have the Commander

nearby to repair them as they take damage. Core's Hydra missile frigates and Enforcers will be a problem, so you must build quickly on both fronts, at the same time reclaiming metal wherever possible. Now, build a Construction Kbot in order to have that unit create a Guardian plasma

The Face in the Mirror

A Hints & Tips Guide for Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror

by Andy Backer

Between the Spider and the Fire

Just back in Paris, and Nico drags me to Professor Oubier's house. Worse, I'm knocked on the head, and she's kidnapped. When I come to, the door is on fire, I'm tied to a chair and a poisonous spider is about to bite me...!

Relax, George. Just examine the bookcase and kick the wedge supporting it to crush the spider. Use the bracket on the wall to untie yourself. Open the drawer in the bureau and pull out the clay pot. Right-

click the pot to discover a key. Open the bureau, drink the Tequila and be sure to pick up the Tequila worm you spat on the floor. Pick up the dart on the floor and take the panties, note and lipstick from Nico's handbag. Right-click the note to get Lobineau's phone number. Use the dart to open the cabinet near the fire. Use the panties to pick up the hot cylinder inside. Use the cylinder on the soda syphon. Put out the fire and leave the room. Call Lobineau from the phone in the hall. Take the newspaper cutting and right-click to discover a financial statement. Use the key on the outside door and go to the Cafe.

Waiting for Lobineau

I need a lead from Lobineau, but he's late for our meeting at the Cafe at Montfauçon.

Lobineau knows the location of the Glease Gallery.

George, Lobineau won't show up until you after you've talked to the waiter and he's brought you a cup of coffee. You can then talk to Lobineau about the clay pot and get the address of the Glease Gallery. Go there after you've taken the flask of absinthe from the ex-gendarme at the next table. Keep talking to him about himself until he holds his head in his hands so he won't notice.

Another One Bites the Dust

I need to get the owner away from the packing case....

Keep pouring absinthe in the obnoxious critic's cheap wine until he falls down. While the owner mourns over his broken shelving, look at the label on the packing case.

Climbing the Fence

I could climb the fence if it weren't for that !@#$ dog....

In Marseilles, look in the window of the hut and watch the guard open the trapdoor. Go down the steps behind the hut and take the boat hook out of the water. Use it to get the bottle floating nearby. Go back to the hut and pour the bottle on the hot chimney cone. Take the cone and put the bottle in the chimney. After the guard has been smoked out, go back down the steps and crawl through the hut's trapdoor. Take the dog biscuits and a lump of coal. Put a biscuit on the platform near Ol' Twenty, the dog. Use the boat hook on the platform to dunk Ol' Twenty. Climb the fence.

In and Out of the Warehouse

I need to get into the warehouse....

Kill the spider by dumping the bookcase on it.

Use the ladder to get to the window next to the fan. Open it and use the boat hook on the fan. Knock at the door and irritate Pablo by pretending to deliver a pizza. When he says he's coming out, climb back up on the ledge and use the clamp to transfer a barrel to the barge. Pablo will investigate, and when he's in the line of fire, bombs away!

Go inside and take the key from the desk drawer. Walk toward the elevator until Titipoco stops you. Use the key on him to unlock his manacles. Push the call button on the elevator. On the next floor use the crate to block the elevator door. Turn on the light switch and examine the scratch marks on the floor. Examine and then open the hidden door to find Nico. Remove the tape from her mouth and untie her. Take the fetish and return to the other room.

Use the rope on the statue in the middle of the room. Use the tape on the elevator door's electric eye and push the crate back. Take the crate off the top of the two stacks and put it on the single crate. Push the former bottom crate away from the

pallet. Click on the handcart to elevate the statue. Hook the rope to the pulley, remove the handcart and get Nico to help push the statue through the door. Go out on the platform and use the manacles on the cable.

Quaramonte
I don't know what I'm doing in Quaramonte....

Talk to everyone, George. Talk to the two musicians about Miguel, music and the mining accident (for laughs feed the goat the lump of coal). Talk to Pearl about Duane. Talk to Duane about his truck, music, Miguel and a detonator. Enter the police station and talk to the General about Oubier. Talk to Renaldo (the General's assistant) about the Pyramid

Before leaving the police station, examine the chart on the wall and then talk to Nico about the chart. Go upstairs to the Mining Office and talk to Conchita about a detonator, Oubier and the chart. Talk to Nico again about the chart, and then talk to the General about Nico and to Renaldo about the Pyramid. Talk to Pearl about the Pyramid, confirming that Renaldo is taking her on a tour. Go back inside the police station and look at the chart. Return to the Mining Office, talk to Conchita about the chart and then get the detonator from the cupboard. Give the detonator to Duane and go talk to Miguel in the jail.

Nico (in the General's apartment), right-click the lava lamp, the tiger-skin rug, the portrait and the TV; talk to the General about the lava lamp, the tiger-skin, the portrait and the TV.

George, talk to Miguel about the noose until he passes it to you. Then give the noose to Duane hanging around outside the window bars (you may have to click on the window bars with the noose, first).

Push the button to go to the Docks

George of the Jungle
Nico is missing, and I don't know how to get the organist's attention...

Take the vine from the broken machine. Put the bank statement on the wet leaves. Grind the fetish on the water wheel. Talk to Hubert about Nico and the root. To press the missionary's collar, pull the cross out of the ground and take it to the stone press. Use the vine on the press, then insert the collar. Use the cross on the press. Give Hubert his collar and talk about the root until he takes you to the village.

Talk to the Indian about Nico, the missionary and the Shaman. Give the biscuits to the Indian to take to the Shaman. When he comes back, combine the empty dog biscuit box with the Coyote Stone and give it to the Indian. Enter the village, and exhaust all topics of conversation. He should give you the root. Back at the tree house, put the cone under the stone press.

Arrange the desk like this to find the treasure

Insert the root. Use the cross on the press. Take the cone filled with antidote up the ladder.

Pirate of the Caribbean
I can't get into the museum....

Talk to Bronson, the surveyor, about the theodolite (the surveyor's instrument). Go to the boat dock and talk to Rio and then go up the steps to the pirate museum on the hill. Try to get the ball away from the cat. Try to open the door. Talk to the old ladies. Go back downstairs and talk to Bronson again — especially about the ladies. Try to look at his plans. Talk to Rio — especially about wanting a fish — and give him the worm. Take the inner tube from the bicycle after he catches it. Talk to him again about wanting a fish. Take the fish after he catches it.

Go back to the museum and use the ladder to climb up to the flagpole. Tie the inner tube to the pole, go down the ladder and tie the fish to the inner tube. Take the ball. Climb up the ladder and untie the inner tube and then tie it to the tree limbs to the left. Use the ball with the catapult to knock off the marker.

After Bronson climbs the ladder and sits on the pole, take away the ladder. Pick up the new marker when he drops it and then go back to the beach. Take his theodolite and plans. Return to the museum and show the plans to the ladies.

Chasing the Jaguar
I need to get out of the British Museum....

Yes, Nicole, but first examine the cabinet with the Jaguar Stone. Then talk to the Attendant about it. Then talk to Oubier about it, and then talk to the Attendant about the ship as well as the stone. Take the key from the empty cabinet and use it to open the cabinet with the obsidian dagger. Take the dagger and then show the key to the Attendant. While he's on the phone, open the curtain and use the dagger on the exit door.

Meanwhile, Back in the Caribbean
Need to know where Ketch hid the Eagle Stone....

Ketch designed his desk to reveal that very piece of information, George. Take the quill out of the penholder. Put the Lantern in the inkwell. Take the chart from the table and put it on the desk. Read the journal in the cabinet. Examine the portrait behind the ship's wheel. Open the trunk. Talk to Emily about her cross. Leave the museum and use the quill on the cat. Pick up the shredded feathers. Go back to the beach and talk to Rio about Emily and his sister. Give him the shredded feathers after he mentions needing a fly to catch tiger fish. Go back to the museum and give the conch to Emily. Put the cross in the penholder. After you know the name of the island (Zombie Island), talk to Rio. He'll take you there. Examine the rocky outcrop

...and the shadow fell precisely over a small, unnamed island — shaped like a skull.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Button

and then right-click Rio's boat. Talk to Rio about the net. Use the net on the rocky outcrop.

Subways are for Sleepers
I need to board a train....

Nicole, use your hair clip on the coin slot in the beverage machine. Take the coin out of the reject box. Use it on the weighing machine to get a card. Use the dagger on the cupboard. Use the card on the crack and push the red button. Earlier in the scene check out the support timbers (sleepers) to the left to see a ghost appear to the right.

On Top of the World, Ma

I need to find the treasure....

Take the top exit into the forest and grab a reed. Take the top right exit and use the reed on the creature's lair. Take the bottom left exit, the next bottom left exit and then the right exit to meet a boar. Combine the reed with the dart in your inventory and shoot the blowgun at the boar. Exit right and take the creeper off needle rock. Combine the net with the creeper and the marker and put it on needle rock.

Take the top exit then exit, top right. Take the top of the two exits left and then exit left. Take the top of the two exits right and go through the middle right exit. Take the right exit to arrive at the top of the world. Place the theodolite on the holes near Ketch's initials. Use the theodolite to scroll right until you see a pillar directly above the shining marker in the jungle. Click on the pillar, leave the theodolite and exit right.

On the Waterfront

*I need to get the
Jaguar Stone....*

All right, Nico, but first change your hiding place to the crate nearer the gangplank. Now wait for the guard to talk to Pablo then scurry up the ladder. After the guard walks by, open the cupboard next to the ladder and scurry back up the ladder. When the guard enters the cupboard, slam the door shut and use the mop to lock it. Now you can look in the porthole. Inside the boat, examine Oubier and then take the Jaguar Stone. Use the obsidian dagger on Karzac to escape.

A Star is Born

I need to get the Eagle Stone....

Hello again, George. Talk to the actors and the director. During lunch break take a pancake, a bottle of syrup and a hard bun. Examine the bush a couple of times to ascertain if there's a hornet's nest in it. Put syrup on the pancake and then give it to Bert Savage, the stunt man. Throw the bun in the bush. Get another one and throw it, too. Watch Bert run!

When the actors move to the beach, right-click the rock pillar and the treasure cave. Examine the camera on the dolly and the portable camera. Talk to the cameraman. Talk to the director about the pillar, the movie and the cameraman.

The Lady, the Dwarf and the Pyramid

I need to get the Coyote Stone....

Yes, Nico, poor George managed to lose the Coyote Stone. See it lying there in the burning village? Tip the barrel to cool the stone. Ask Titipoco to help you. Grab the stone and exit left.

You found the pyramid. Good. Now take the cylinder from the left machine, use the dagger on the fuel line and collect fuel with the cylinder from the fuel line. Pour the fuel from the cylinder into the engine (click the cylinder on the fuel cap). Push the button on the engine. Try out the lever. Examine the gantry, pick up the rope and talk to Titipoco. He'll rig the rope in the gantry. Connect the rope ends to the engine. Talk to Titipoco about the lever. Get on the elevator and talk to Titipoco.

At the sacrificial altar, take the ammo, get back on the elevator and go down. Walk to the left and talk to the guard about Karzac. Take the torch and ask Titipoco to light it. Toss the ammo on the fire. Scare the General (click on him), and untie George.

Inside the pyramid, try pulling both the left and right levers and then ask George to help you pull them simultaneously. You

drop into the wheel room. To solve the glyph puzzle go to the right. The monkey statue has four tiles, each with four glyphs. Find the two tiles (in the array to the statue's left) that match the four glyphs—two glyphs per tile. Go to the wheels and push them so that the two glyphs on one tile are facing each other in the center. Then push the matching array tile. It should move slightly. Repeat the sequence for the second array tile, and then go push the matching monkey statue tile. It should also depress. When all four monkey tiles have been depressed the secret door opens.

Tezcatlipoca, the Face in the Mirror

I need to get to the mirror room....

We'll get you there, George. First right-

Revealed Exit
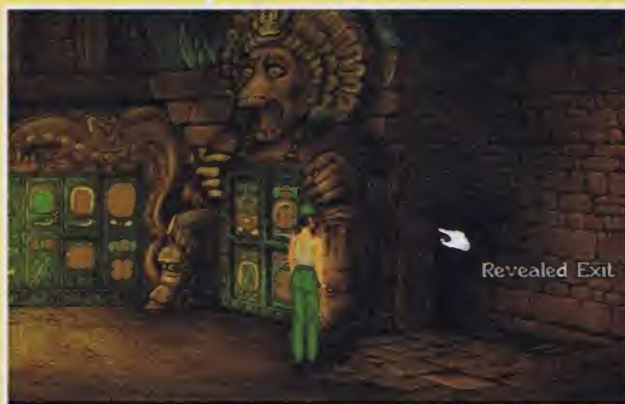
click on the lever than pick up the torch and ask Titipoco to light it. Ooops! Now pull the lever in this room and exit left. Pull the right hand lever and exit through the top. In the corridor, pull the nearest lever to you and exit through the open door. You're back in the first room. Pick up the torch and use it to light the torch on the wall. Take the second torch (you'll go down the stairs). Pull the lever, watch the floor withdraw and go down the stairs (to certain death).

Exit right on this screen to get out of the forest maze

Depressing the four monkey statue tiles reveals the secret door

NEXT ISSUE

FEATURE STORIES

Interactive Magic — The company known for it's insanely detailed simulations is trying to branch out into more mainstream games with their new 7 Kingdoms. Join us for an inside peek at I-Magic new strategy for taking over the world.

On-line Gaming — Ed Dille turns up the HEAT.NET in a feature story on the new gaming service that has taken the Internet by storm.

Sony Interactive Studios — Ed Dille visited Sony Interactive's new studios in San Diego and got a sneak peek at the future of their hot new on-line tank sim, Tanarus, plus a first look a Everquest. Ed shows us what gamers can expect to suck them into paying even more hourly charges..

Pigskin Roundup — Are you ready for some football?! We'll take a look at the latest and hottest gridiron masterpieces and tell you which are potential champs and which are incomplete passes.

Blade Runner — Join us for the very first Blade Runner review, courtesy of our own Andy Backer. At least I think that's Andy...

HINTS & TIPS

More of the best hints and tips including a Monkey Island III walkthrough, Tomb Raider II, and the second part of our exclusive Total Annihilation tips by strategy guide author Selby Bateman.

PREVIEWS, REVIEWS AND MORE!

Our usual cast of replicants will be back next month to give you the straight skinny on new titles like: Myth, Nuclear Strike, Zork Grand Inquisitor, Temujin, Panzer General II, DID's F-22, G-Police, Sierra's Pro Pilot, CART precision racing, Riven, and Dark Reign.

We'll also be getting you early info on great stuff like Star Wars: Rebellion, Interstate '77, Starship Troopers and more! Also – Five EXCLUSIVE units for Cavedog's Total Annihilation you can't find anywhere else!

Those people who think CGE reviewers and editors are awash in free goodies would be shocked to find out what we really got from game companies for Christmas. In that vein, we present: PR Freebies we'd like to see.

Armored Fist 2 – Novalogic: What we got: stinky smelly cigar. What we wanted: Real Abrams tank.

Hexen II – Activision: What we got: Rusty horseshoe (really!). What we wanted: Date with Activision's PR manager.

CART Precision Racing – Microsoft: What we got: Nice set of driving gloves. What we wanted: Nice set of driving gloves that fit.

Where in the world is Carmen Sandiego? – Borderbund: What we got: "Date with Carmen Sandiego!" What we wanted: Date with Carmen Electra.

Myth – Bungie: What we got: Dagger shaped letter opener. What we wanted: Actually, the letter opener was pretty cool.

Virus – Sirtech: What we got: Foam-insulated "biohazard" package with fluid filled test tube inside, supposedly filled with influenza. What we wanted: Insight into Scott Wolf's character as he proceeded to drink contents of test tube.

Dark Earth – Microprose: What we got: Cheap plastic binoculars. What we wanted: Expensive GT/Microprose stock.

Worms 2 – Microprose: What we got: Rubber banana. What we wanted: Real banana, we're kind of hungry right now.

HEY, CODE MONKEYS!

You may have noticed, next month we'll be giving you five exclusive units for Cavedog's Total Annihilation. We designed 'em and we think they're pretty cool, but we know that we're not the only people who love using game editors to create new units levels and whole new games. That's why, starting this month, we're putting a call out for the best user designed units, missions, levels maps, and conversions for games like Quake, Dark Reign, and Steel Panthers III. E-mail your best stuff to Mag@ CGEntertainment.com. We'll judge 'em, and one winner a month will receive a FULL RETAIL VERSION GAME pulled from the vast recesses of the CGE Game Vault. The winner and everything else we think is really cool will appear every month on our demo disc and our website.

If you don't have e-mail you can snail mail your levels on 3.5" disc to:

Level Submissions
Computer Game Entertainment
100 West 32nd Street
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New York, NY 10001

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